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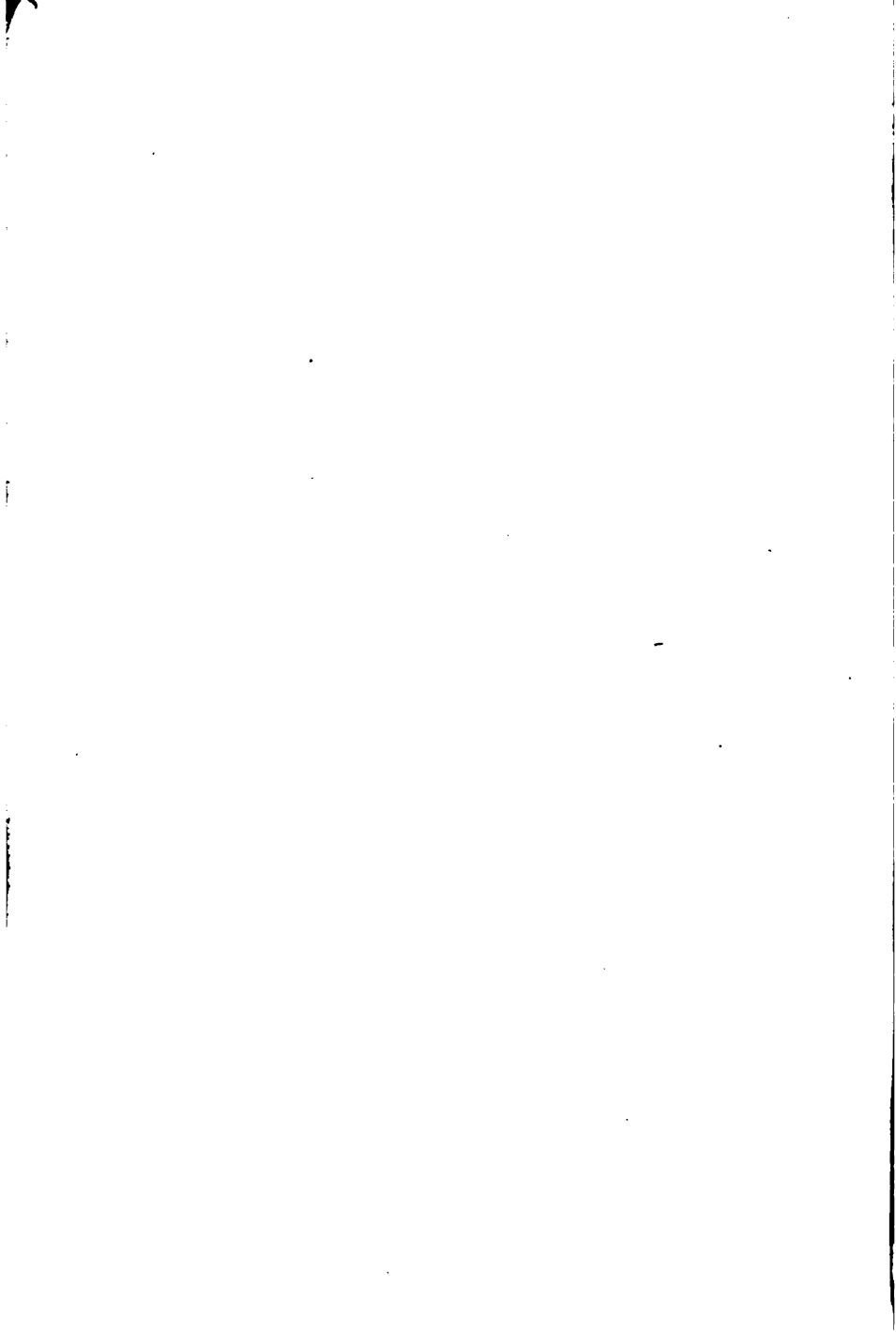
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S. O. Jewett



**THE SENTIMENTAL  
TRAVELLER**



THE SENTIMENTAL  
TRAVELLER ❧ ❧ ❧  
NOTES ON PLACES ❧

BY  
VERNON LEE

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY. MCMVIII



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## **DEDICATION**



To  
IRENE FORBES-MOSSE  
*Geborene Gräfin v. Flemming*

To whom should I dedicate this book, if not to you, dear neighbour and fellow-traveller? Neighbour, not merely in a brick-and-mortar (and, since I have built it, let us hope, not incommodious) dwelling, but in the closer vicinity of thought and feelings. And fellow-traveller, also, down the sloping twilit years, as well as across the woods and vineyards and old gabled market-places of this unmetaphorical world of space.

It has always seemed to me that to know a country one must have friends belonging to it; bodiless friends, perhaps, in book or music score; but better, friends of flesh and blood, the colour of whose eyes and skin, the gesture of whose hands and cadence of whose voice bring direct and unreasoned experience of a whole race's temper and gifts. Gifts in both

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## Dedication

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meanings of the word ; for to those who will receive, each country brings its spiritual riches : wine and wheat, and milk and honey of life, healing mountain herbs, lavender also to keep our locked presses sweet, and incense gums, in the wreathes of whose smoke there arise visions and wonders.

Possessors and givers of gifts, that is what all true friends are, according to their temperament and circumstances, more especially, even, according to the country of their birth and bringing up. Thus to have had friends of various nationality has always seemed one of the signal good fortunes of my life, adding a meaning to that of books, even as books add meaning to the landscape given us by the eye. And to enlarge on this good fortune is not mere gratitude or self-gratulation, but, in our times of dog-in-the-manger and bluster-to-keep-up-your-courage nationalism, a public duty one should go out of the way to accomplish, lest the world be built over with custom-houses and barracks.

How the soul of a nation can be felt through that of an individual is illustrated by all that my youth owed to Spain. I do not know the language enough to spell through a chapter of

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## Dedication

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Cervantes ; and I have been only a month in the country, in the south, moreover, and coming and going by sea without even passing Madrid, Castile, and the Pyrenees. But Spain has helped my whole life with its ironical paradox, its hyperbolic, "all or nothing" Quixotry, its cavalier aloofness from petty realities and futile advantage, its preference, as in the painting of Velasquez compared with that of Rubens, of the black and white bony essentials of things to their pink and juicy pulpiness. And all through a random friendship, lopsided and unaccountable as befits his country, with a retired Spanish diplomatist, who, if still living, has utterly forgotten his young friend of near thirty years ago.

Matters have seemed more commonplace and intelligible with my French and Italian friendships. Yet I could never put in words what I have learned from my French friends of *friendship as such*, of high-bred simplicity and goodness, and lucid humane idealism. Nor what deep-seated serene reasonableness, what grace, and what genius I have met, like the flower-grown walls and buried treasure of old, old civilizations, in the everyday life of my dear Italians. And may one not speak, as if

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## Dedication

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from outside, of one's own compatriots? How often has there not been brought home to me the chivalrous adventure and passionate poetry of our race, quivering beneath the reserve and the silence of some English friend !

But of all the countries, the first to be good to me was Germany, coming, in the shape of my nurses and of my dear Bernese governess, fairy-like to my christening or thereabouts. And now, at the other end of my life, here is Germany once more with her gifts in your dear hands, my fellow-traveller, my neighbour. You have lit up once more the Christmas-tree hung round with dear childish splendours, but smelling of all the moss and woodruff and centuries-deep dead leaves of the rustling and sighing and singing, the mysterious and musical German forests. And who, better than you, could have done it ; and were you not born for just such a *Bescheerung* ? For they were your great-uncles, those Grimms and Brentanos, who wrote down the Fairy Tales and the ballads of the *Wunderhorn*, and made finer ones themselves, your uncle Clemens actually giving the Rhine, in a freak of literary forgery, her presiding Lorelei. Was it not your grandfather, Achim von Arnim,

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## Dedication

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who wrote the masterpiece of German *Romantik*, of gruesomeness and mystery and humour and absurdity, the story of *Isabella von Egypten*? Far more, in that portrait in your possession, your grandmother is seated at the piano which was chosen for her by Beethoven, and she muses over the letters which Goethe had written her when she was the *Child*, the *Bettina* of the immortal correspondence. Who, therefore, is more fitting than you to light up once more the magic tapers of the Christmas-tree?

It is in return for this latest and greatest gift of German friendship that I now give you, absurdly disproportionate! this little book of mine.

For this reason, and also, dear neighbour and fellow-traveller, because we have met at a stage of life's journey when there remains little to distract us from its sentimental and humorous contemplation; and we may, therefore, hope to continue it together to the end of the volume, the volume which is not written and printed, but lived.

VERNON LEE.

VALLOMBROSA,  
July, 1907.





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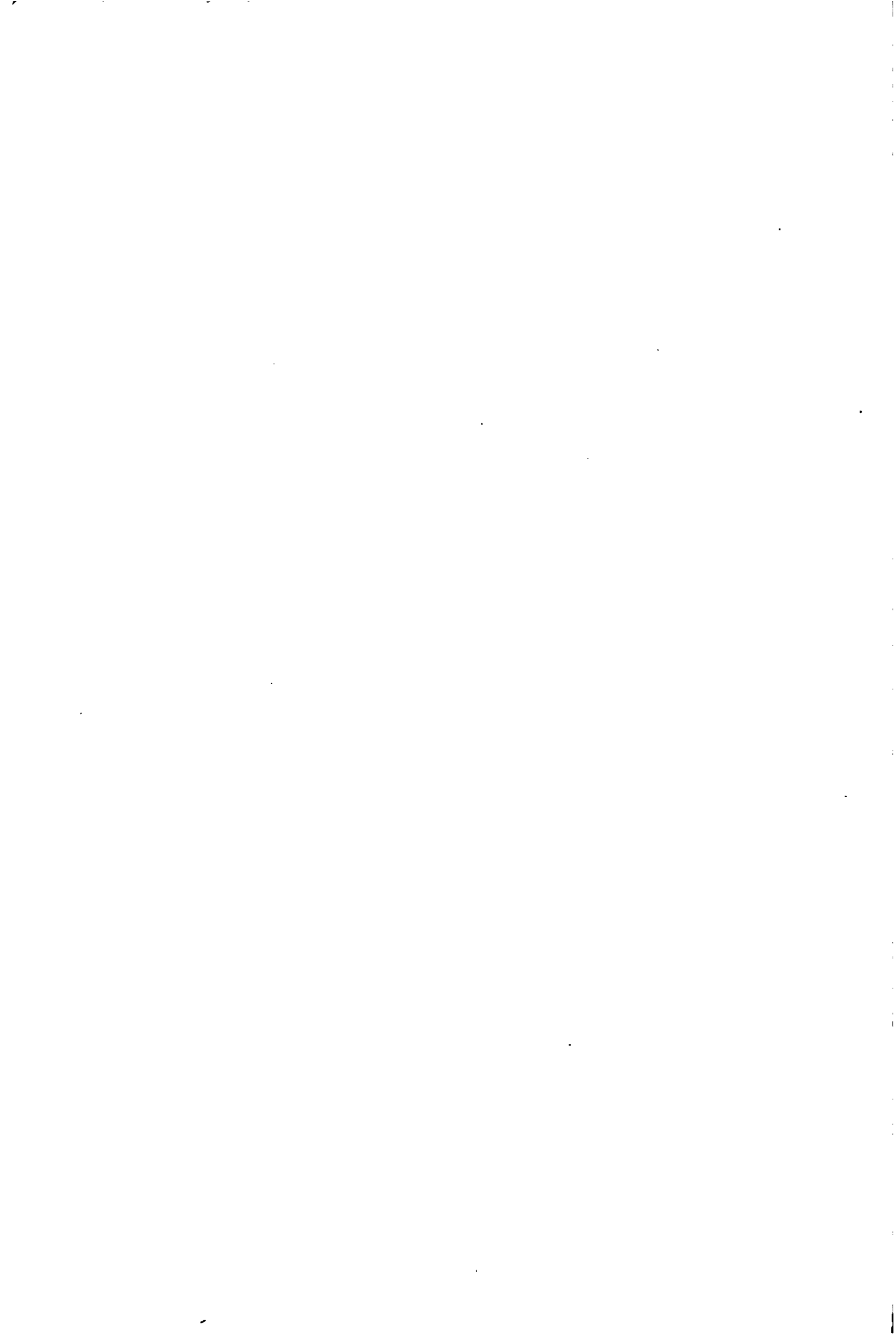
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## INTRODUCTION



## THE SENTIMENTAL TRAVELLER

**L**AST week, during a visit to a seaside place which has played a certain part in my life of reality and fancy, in my humble "Wahrheit und Dichtung," some questions asked made me aware that my friends, even the nearest and dearest, imagine me to have been born and brought up in a gipsy-cart, at any rate metaphorically. A childhood of romantic roamings would account in their eyes for my worship of the Genius of Places, such as it is, and for my being a Sentimental Traveller. Now all, this happens not to be the case ; and having discovered this agreeable myth, I want to dispel it, not because it is erroneous (which most statements about friends' lives are), but because there might be deduced from it a view of things in general the exact reverse of the one I have. Since I believe that living in gipsy-carts (or



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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*trains de luxe*, motors, and Cook's hotels) is of all modes of life the most sacrilegious to the Genius Loci ; and as regards myself, that I have grown into a Sentimental Traveller because I have travelled not more, but less, than most folk—at all events, travelled a great deal less than I have wanted.

For the passion for localities, the curious emotions connected with lie of the land, shape of buildings, history, and even quality of air and soil, are born, like all intense and permeating feeling, less of outside things than of our own soul. They are of the stuff of dreams, and must be brooded over in quiet and void. The places for which we feel such love are fashioned, before we see them, by our wishes and fancy ; we recognize rather than discover them in the world of reality ; and this power of shaping, or at least seeing, things to suit our hearts' desire, comes not of facility and surfeit, but of repression and short commons.

This is probably true about a great many matters ; I know it by experience in that of the feeling for places. Instances may indeed be quoted which seem to go against me, but they do not really ; instances, I mean, of the passion

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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for travel growing by what it feeds on. Thus among our mothers and grandmothers there arose a breed of Sentimental Travellers, insatiate, indefatigable, some of whom still survive (and may they long do so !) to show our puny generations what the passion for localities can do at threescore and ten. Priestesses of the Genius Loci, vestals often, urged by divine frenzy across the picturesque globe, from dangerous inn to even more formidable pension, from caravanseraï to mysterious Casa de Huespedes, reputable maenads, bearing instead of thyrsi and haunches of kid, campstools and old-fashioned sunshades ; but sedate with nods and becks and wreathed smiles under caps and bonnets which seem fresh from the bandboxes of "Cranford" ; venerable and exquisite priestesses of the Divinity of Places, sacred and wonderful above all other old ladies. . . . They seem, indeed, to have always travelled ; and we wish, we pray, they may ever continue to do so ; thus apparently reducing my theories to nonsense. But it is not so. For consider their parentage and upbringing. Their fathers and mothers witnessed the first railways, and were penned up very likely in our islands by

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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the wars of Napoleon. They are born of innumerable stay-at-home generations ; and this unimpaired zest for travel is but the accumulated thwarted longing of all those sedentary lives.

As for myself, I cannot indeed pretend that my immediate forebears were stay-at-homes, or that my childhood should be described as sedentary. We shifted our quarters invariably every six months, and, by dint of shifting, crossed Europe's length and breadth in several directions. But this was *moving*, not *travelling*, and we contemned all travellers. That little seaside place, which started these reflections, has brought home the difference to me, and made me grasp that if I am a Sentimental Traveller 'tis because I was not brought up to travel. To spend a month by the sea had been a strange departure from immemorial custom ; for did we not divide the year between two places only, usually in the same country, six months called "winter" in one, and six months called "summer" in the other, deducting only the days or hours materially necessary for the transit, and marking each period by the ceremony of taking and giving up an inventory ? Now, to spend a month in that bathing-place

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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of dim Napoleonic Grecian-pilaster-and-lyre-backed-chair fashionableness (we had a pensive preference for watering-places out of date or out of season), thus to detach a month, meant cutting down winter and summer to five months and a half each : most manifest disorder ! Of course the breach of family custom did not stop here. It was from that seaside place, from a house still unchanged, as all the ex-homes of my family should be, that started my first journey for journeying's sake, paid with my earliest earnings and abetted by my reluctant and horrified father. It lasted only a week, and its raptures left in me a certain sense of guilt. For, as already mentioned, I had been brought up to despise persons who travelled in order to "sight-see." *We* never saw any sights. We moved ourselves and our luggage regularly, as already stated, and, obeying some mysterious financial or educational ebb and flow, backwards and forwards between the same two places, and every now and then between a new couple of places in a different part of the globe. But we were careful to see nothing on the way, save the inns where we slept, the refreshment-rooms where we ate, and the Custom-houses

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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where we opened our boxes, whose contents must have been familiar to the officials. Neither did we see anything at either end ; of such things, at least, as are registered in guide-books. The only guide-book I can recollect being used in our family was one to Paris, which was read out loud at a time when we had no intention of visiting the French capital. And this matter of the "Guide to Paris" sheds much light on our life and our views of life. The members of my family ate, drank, slept, made music, constructed machines, fished, shot, read, and walked, particularly walked, in one place and one quarter of Europe exactly as in the other. Taking walks would seem to introduce inevitable diversity, since one locality is hilly, another flat ; one consists of streets, the other of woods ; one is in the heart of Switzerland, the other by the Mediterranean. But that is only the superficial view of idle and gadabout persons ; and we had the art of taking the same walk, or the same sort of walk, in spite of all such differences. Much was achieved by daily resort to some public promenade—Lichtenthaler Allee, Promenade des Anglais, Cascine, Pincio—at unfrequented hours. And where such aids to

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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monotony did not exist the same result could be obtained by steady repetition of the same turn by a given high-road and back across certain meadows or woods. That wonderful walk, the same all the world over ! For while the feet pulverized the same amount of macadam or displaced the equivalent gravel, how widely and delightfully did not the mind, the inner eye, disport themselves ! We never went out without a book ; and, so long as my memory reaches, my mother always read out loud while walking, interrupting herself only to enlarge upon the subject, to tell stories, and discuss theories ; so that every turn of every promenade in Europe, nay, every bench and bush thereof, represents for my mind a host of imaginary persons and places. To return, for instance, to that guide to the sights and monuments of Paris : there was Notre Dame, the Pantheon, the Louvre whence Charles IX. fired on the Protestants, the Place de la Concorde (formerly Place Louis XV.) where people had been guillotined ; well, what need was there for *us* to go and see those things ? To do so was necessary, doubtless, for some persons without feeling or imagination. But as for us,

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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the first year that inexplicable tides drifted us to Rome, we cast a perfunctory glance at St. Peter's, the Coliseum, and the tomb of Keats (for, after all, we were not eccentric—only wise !), and settled down forthwith to the Pincian, the Villa Borghese, and an evening stroll down the deserted Corso. Add to these resorts Piale's Circulating Library (full of Tauchnitz novels and memoirs and collections of old plays), also Nazzari's, where on high days we regaled on chocolate and repeated how the spoon stuck upright in that of the Cardinals—sum it all up, and you have, pretty nearly, what Rome meant in our eyes during those five or six winters of my childhood and adolescence.

Now, into this severely regulated reasonable reality there burst, by the strangest of chances, a brief but unforgotten vision of Rome as it existed for other folk. I have alluded to a generation of wondrous priestesses of the Genius Loci, some of whom still delight and awe us by the sacred fury of travel which impels them.

Well ! what should a contrast-loving Fate decree but that my family—yes, mine, such as I have described its habits—should have made friends with the high priestess of them all, the

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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most favoured and inspired votary of the Spirit of Localities, she who averred that the happiest moment in life was in a hotel 'bus—no other, in short, than the enchanting, indomitable, incomparable Mrs. S——.

And since I have mentioned her, let me, before telling what I owed to her in my childhood—owed to her for all my life, whatever its value—speak in the name of all those chance fellow-travellers whose later journeys over the globe, or over life's slopes and valleys, have been dotted with light and colour by joyful meetings with this most genially imperious, this most wittily courteous, this most wisely fantastic of Wandering Ladies. Alas! we have missed her already in her home, that very literally named *pied-à-terre* whence she was for ever lifting the other foot (so to speak) in the direction of distant lands. But it is natural enough not to find her there; and what will it be when we begin to understand that she is not elsewhere on our earth, but journeying a longer way, making, like Orpheus, Charon and Cerberus civil with her courteous cheeriness; and putting, what that other great traveller De Staël called "un air écossais"—a coloured and variegated gaiety



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—into the moonlight of the Elysian Regions? I have not been to Venice since the time we were there together; but what can the lagoon of Murano, the canals of the Giudecca, be like without that dear, venerable figure busily sketching through the gondola door; without that jocund voice admonishing one, in moments of indifference and depression, that the journey of life might be delightful to the last?

Well, to return to myself, who owe her so much. Such a coming together of opposites does seem improbable; but, happily, it is a fact: we children, hers and I, had met and sailed boats and bartered stamps in a lodging-house garden. And then we met again in Rome, that first year in the legendary reign of Pio Nono. I do not think my family ever realized Mrs. S——'s high vocation, for they did not know of the cultus of the Genius Loci, or even of his existence. And it is certain that dear Mrs. S—— never conceived the bare possibility of people as stay-at-home as we; so that whenever, in later years, I have expressed my indebtedness she has been unfeignedly incapable of understanding a word of my discourse. For all my grateful explanations, she could never

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guess the kind of benefit bestowed on that small prig who was her children's playfellow. The benefit, in fact, was less a matter of deeds and things definite and tangible than of subtle influences ; although if I did see anything of Rome in my early years, it was during the months of strolling after her in and out of churches, palaces, and ruins, in company with Emily and John. For what I saw was less potent than what I overheard at meals in the hospitable little house (a sacred spot for me now) which looked across to St. Peter's, and during the evenings when we children cut out lamp-shades and polished bits of marble in a corner of the drawing-room, alongside the bust of Washington. I heard of rides in the Campagna, where you met brigands occasionally, and even the Serpent-in-Chief, about whom I forthwith wrote a story ; I heard of excursions—my family never made excursions—to Albano and Frascati, and Horace's Sabine Farm—enchanting name ! And beyond this Rome, which seemed to exist for those unlike ourselves, appeared dim outlines of other parts of the world, with magic Alhambras and Temples of Paestum and Alpine forests ; a Europe

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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occupying other dimensions than that network of railways blobbed with hotels and custom-houses across which I was periodically hurried from inventory to inventory. Into this magic world so separate from ours the S—— family speedily vanished, as ghosts into the Fourth Dimension ; only occasional juvenile epistles, postmarked Prague or Seville or Bruges or Chamonix, marking its unclutchable tracks. . . .

Meanwhile the gravel and the benches of the Pincian, the carriage drive round Villa Borghese, Piazza di Spagna with Nazzari's cake-shop and Piale's Circulating Library, all closed once more round my childhood. But—O wonder !—as they tightened with every month and year they squeezed into an intoxicating philtre the love for the Rome hidden in my imagination. And in the nostalgic longing for that city, unknown though looked down on during each daily walk, began my secret worship of the Genius Loci, of the spirit immanent in those cupolas and towers and hilly pine-groves which seemed as far beyond my reach almost as the sun setting behind them. Thus I became a Sentimental Traveller.

**BOOK I**  
**GERMANY**

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## UP THE RHINE

**T**HERE is nothing like a waterway for penetrating into a country—'tis the natural road to its heart, its mountains. And surely no waterway can be more lovely and more solemn than this Rhine, which we superfine moderns are apt to treat as the holiday stream of Cockneys. To such of us as have not looked at things and read books all to no purpose, this mighty mass of waters is also a flood of associations, carrying in its swirls the thought of distant and different places and times. The poetry of one-half of the great Alps is in it; the thought, as well as the waters, of every turquoise glacier runnel and baby trickle among moss and gentians, of every torrent and waterfall and lake and swift brimful river we have watched from the covered lock bridges. Does it not carry along a thread of water which is that little

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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stream of the Grisons we watched together among the boulders and fallen trees, and listened to, brawling far below, in the stillness of Alpine nights ? And carry with that water the thought of distant friends ?

Going up the Rhine, between Coblenz and Bingen, as we were to-day, meeting that wide, steady flood with the wind in one's face, there comes the feeling also, with the reverence and love which such things inspire, that one is going into the depths of Germany and of the German heart ; for it seems an accident that the Rhine is a frontier river, and every nation save the German-speaking ones seem immeasurably far away.

As the river bends slowly to meet the steamer labouring against the wind, every reach discovers its little town or village. White-beamed houses roofed with slate, round the steeple, built, one would think, by Comacene masons ; a row of little limes in front, orchards and grass, sometimes widening to valleys, behind ; and the rocks pale yellow with ripening vines. Each of these river-bends plays at being a lake (the screaming gulls confirming it) closed in by hills dim in the sunshine, with

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## Up the Rhine

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hogged fir-forest or poplared high-lying road against the evening sky.

In all the poetry of the Rhine (the poetry not made about it by men, but inspired, perhaps unspoken, in men's souls) there is not merely the wonder of the great waterway from Alps to ocean, which measures the length of German-speaking lands ; there is also the sense of this great cañon between baseless rocks being a great walled garden which in this inclement North yields the fruits and the joyousness of the Southern lands. "Sonnig—wonnig" are the recurrent rhymes in all praise of the Rhine ; and to the poetry of great waters is added the poetry of the vine and the wine-cup, of heightened life and easier speech.

I wrote these things on the steamer between Coblenz and Bingen ; but, as a fact, it was not with them that my mind was really busy. That slow voyage inland was also, and mainly, a journey into the past. Mine ? In the sense of possession, certainly. For there are few things we possess more thoroughly than those of which we have "heard tell" in our childish years ; the child clinging in nostalgic fashion to



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the places and people it has made up for itself out of the words of grown-up folk. Thus, while the boat slowly made head against the wind and current, among the steamers tugging huge barges and the half-submerged rafts, there came into my head (long before it appeared to my eyes) the little town of Boppard. My mother had spent some weeks there long before I was born, and it had come to partake in her telling—or, at least, in my listening—of the romance peculiar to the places where she had stayed in her wandering days of young widowhood. At Boppard one lodged (I say *one*, for I too seemed to have been of the party) in a former nunnery, picking ripe grapes from a trellis overhead; and there were bones of nuns dug up in the garden. I saw it, the bones as delicious as the grapes; perhaps I was vaguely influenced therein by the Nuns' Ballet in "Robert le Diable," which I had heard played by military bands and described, it also, by my elders as we walked about. The steamer carried me upstream also among prints and cheap oil-landscapes seen in my childhood, views of the Rhine and its villages and castles, the picture arising in my memory as the original hove in sight. Chief

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## Up the Rhine

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of these was the Pfalz Castle at Kaub, sitting as it does like a duck in the shallow middle of the stream, or rather like the enchanted duck for which children angle with a magnet ; partaking, moreover, of the pagoda on old screens, and most certainly also of some wonderful pudding (rather dreamed of than ever really seen) : cupola on cupola, stuck about with atticks instead of almonds, and bristling with flagstaffs, where the stiff sticks of angelica would have projected.

Into the stories of my nurse Franziska did that Rhine steamer carry me, panting against the yellow sunset curdles of the current. There were her father's schoolhouse and her grandfather's parsonage (not without Gargantuan details) ; the grandfather who had given Napoleon a piece of his mind, and who said : "The hair of the head, the ornament of mankind, let it hang, let it hang," an oracular remark which my friend Edmund Gosse has identified as a hexameter of the idyllic poet Voss. That Rheingau of Franziska's, I had certainly never beheld it with the eyes of the flesh ; and I do not know whether I ever really saw that stout marbled volume of Rhineland

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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legends which Franziska always promised to bring back from her holidays. But what realities they have remained for me! And how the names of these Rhine villages and castles and hills are steeped in the heady essence of my childish emotions!

But, oddly enough, there were mixed up in it all, and as vivid as any personal impressions, reminiscences of people who lived in this Rhineland just a hundred years ago (the earliest letters to Goethe from *the Child* are of 1805), of a book read, or at least re-read, by me in my quite unimaginative middle-aged present. But the book, the letters of Bettina Brentano, are the most wonderful expression of a romantic time and a romantic creature, as full of perfume and pleasant intoxication as the wine which pours out of some century-old cobwebbed-over bottle; and a curious personal good fortune (which I shall perhaps some day narrate) has made Bettina and her brothers and friends into ghosts more familiar to me than those which haunt mere printed books. Be this as it may, this Rhineland, yesterday, was full of her. These were perchance the hills where, in the ruined chapel, she buried Goethe's letters and planted a

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## Up the Rhine

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vine upon them. I seemed to recognize the riverside meadow, reedy and willowy, where her friend the young canoness killed herself for love. Was it not in this cheerful little convent, rose-coloured, under the slate of its roof and in the shadow of its pagoda belfry, that a dear little nun had cultivated a certain myrtle bush? And, at every bend of the river, I sought the white, old-fashioned town where Bettina and her brothers had taken boat on the Rhine. For me, at least, this volume of letters has given the Rhineland its fitting inhabitants : those wonderful housefuls of boys and girls of genius, collecting fairy tales and ballads or making up better ones themselves (was it not Bettina's brother Clemens who gave the Rhine its very goddess, the Lurlei, naming for ever the nameless rock?), young people free, without parents or precedents, singing songs on hills and water under the moonlight, climbing at midnight into haunted towers, playing their pranks while the cannon of Napoleon echoed over the Rhine ; and through it all the little letters of Goethe, enclosed in those of his mother, coming ever and anon to flood that little girl's great heart with passionate poetry.

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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This is the appropriate life of the Rhine ; and to me at least it seems, in some very personal manner, to continue ; Bettina seeming to describe it all for me quite especially, and knowing what I want to be told.

It had been cloudy when we left Coblenz, and a few drops fell. But, as the afternoon advanced, the wind down the Rhine, blowing in our faces, swept the sky to a delicate autumn sunniness ; the sun, descending, turning the sallow mass of waters to pale curdled gold. Besides the steamers and rafts and tugged barges there were, every now and then, boats and pontoons full of soldiers returning from the manœuvres. They cheered our steamer as they passed, and the steamer cheered back ; and they sang in parts as they steered their cumbersome coupled craft towards the sunset. The water and the vineclad rocks had the golden pallor of Southern afternoons ; and I understood how, in the days of Goethe and Bettina, those Germans, of whom so few ever got outside Germany, were forced to find in Germany itself (and where better than in this Rhineland ?) the realization of that majesty and loveliness of life with which the classic revival of the eighteenth

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## Up the Rhine

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century had filled their mind. The Rhineland was to them their Greece and Italy, their South, their Country of the Gods. And, for their sake and its own, it should be so, a little, to us.

## STIFTSDAMEN

**T**HERE are things one loves beforehand without rhyme or reason, making them up out of a stray word or two to please the idle fancy.

Thus it had been with those Protestant nunneries (Damenstifte, *ladies' foundations*, is the untranslatable German word) which are one of the quaint and pleasant contradictions (like the coloured Madonnas opposite the blackboards with Psalm numbers) preserved by Lutheranism for the delectation of the Teutonic soul.

I had read of the inmates of such places, and occasionally heard about them ; nay, I had once or twice met such a mature spinster perambulating this dangerous world safe in her metaphorical robes emblazoned over with heraldry. Aurora von Königsmark, beloved of Polish King Augustus, and (very nearly, it is said, of the woman-hater Charles of Sweden)

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## Stiftsdamen

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mother of heroic Marshal Saxe, grandmother of romantic Aurore Dudevant, who signed her books George Sand—Aurora von Königsmark had been a canoness, nay, provostess, nay, very nearly abbess, of the *Damenstift* of Quedlinburg. The Gündertode, whose suicide for love of the pedant Kreutzer was narrated to Goethe in that marvellous letter of Bettina's, was a Stiftsdame of the Rhineland. And so likewise, saving mistake, Goethe's own Fräulein von —, I cannot recollect her name, who sat for the "Beautiful Soul" in Wilhelm Meister. Haunted by such sentiment and romance, I set out for Germany in hopes of seeing *Damenstifte*, and, if possible, *Stiftsdamen*.

My first impression of such places was at Goslar, and accidental. Looking for a certain Romanesque church, I asked my way of a kind old lady at the door of a delightful eighteenth-century house, its whitewash spalliered over with pear-trees. She bade me ring a bell hard by, and pass through whitewashed corridors with views of laundry and kitchen; the cook would bring the key of the church. It was Kloster Neuburg, a *Damenstift*! "And is that lady a canoness—a Stiftsdame?" I asked, eagerly.



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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“Yes, but not a noble one ; *Keine adelige*,” answered the cook, leading me to the church across the convent grass-plot, where the sheets and fresh-washed clothes were waving on drying-lines among the apple-trees. *Keine adelige* ; it was a little disappointing. But I was consoled for the canonesses’ lack of quarterings by the charm of that little church among the apple-trees and full-berried elder bushes, with the sweet white linen streaming in the cold autumn sunshine.

At the next place of *Damenstifts* the ladies were indeed noble, quite unapproachably *high well-born* ; but they were dead, the last of them, since a hundred years. It was at Quedlinburg, Aurora von Königsmark’s Quedlinburg. With the old wooden houses clustered round its base, the great Abbey—church, convent, fortress—rises abrupt above the town, grows out of the yellow rock. You pass some big yellowing limes and climb up a steep road roughly paved with granite, which twists round the hill and passes under an archway ; overhead the curved eaves and tall towers of the basilica ; and round about it, like a village with its trees and gardens, the houses of the Abbey : some of Nurnberg

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## Stiftsdamen

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seventeenth century or Dutch gabled fashion, like poops of old three-deckers ; others made French by addition of long windows and a glazed gallery, a bulb-crowned turret holding the principal stairs. A nice young girl took us over part of the convent's eighteenth-century rooms, bare, but with delicate stuccoed ceiling and painted wall-papers and fine Louis XV. stoves, and French windows ; and such a wide, amusing view over the plum- and orange-coloured roofs, and, wherever there were gaps or squares, over the old houses, like farms, painted sea-blue or sea-green ; the remaining town gates and towers projecting, and the coupled spires of several old churches, with their look of being the tails of plunging swallows. Immediately below, limes and great lilac-trees sprouting out of the rock ; and beyond, in the autumn mist, the low hills, freshly ploughed, pale yellow and tan, and furred at the top with their woods ; and, almost invisible, the Harz.

The dismantled apartments are hung with the portraits of the Abbesses since the Reformation—seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ladies with bare bosoms and jewelled hair, and

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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wonderful coats-of-arms alongside of them : Holstein-Gottorp ; Saxony this, that, or the other ; and the stags of the Harz potentates, Stolberg-Wernigerode. One looks, instinctively, for Aurora von Königsmark ; and she, having been only provostess, is missing. But her memory is everywhere, and constitutes the romance of the Abbey. The girl shows one a flower-piece from her hand ; and there are her rooms overlooking the lilac-bushes ; and the great coffers with her arms and those of Saxony. Perhaps some of the romance of this woman, in our eyes, is due not merely to her sway over Augustus of the three hundred and sixty odd bastards, nor to her attempt upon the chill ferocity of Charles XII., nor even to her brother's tragedy ; but a little to her blood having flowed in George Sand. One gets almost to feel as if she had been the one beautiful woman ever born in this Germany of kindly feminine plainness. And certainly she is the lady of Quedlinburg. The beadle of the Abbey Church points out her insignificant wooden coffin among the bronze and embossed leaden ones in the Abbesses' vault. It used to be open, but had to be fastened down because

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## Stiftsdamen

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too many people cut off locks of her blond hair. And to show how well the saltpetre of the rock had preserved the mistress of Augustus the Strong, the beadle suddenly took the lid off a tiny baby's coffin. Turning away, I just caught sight of something shrivelled and brown among faded pink and white ribbons. Had Aurora von Königsmark also ended as such a huge, moth-eaten doll? We had enough of dead *Stiftsdamen*, and hastened out on to the terrace of the Abbey Church, to look down on the roofs of Quedlinburg and its ploughed hillocks, veiled in sun and mist. But I was allowed to carry away from Germany kindlier impressions of Damenstifts and their inhabitants.

It was a day of veiled sunniness, most suitable to that flat Brunswick country which takes its grace from curves of wood against field and meadow, as other countries do from unevenness of the land. We walked from the station between yellowing poplars, through potato-fields with their bitter-sweet trails of smoke, on to a kind of village green set with immense limes, raining down their leaves in the white sunny air. And here appeared above the russet

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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of an orchard some high-pitched roofs of that cocked-hat pattern of Louis XV. France which gives the humblest buildings an aristocratic grace not without jauntiness. It was the Damenstift of Prüffening, no former convent, but founded a hundred and twenty-five years ago by a Wolfenbüttel princess as a hunting gift from her father. Two *corps de logis* advance slightly on either side of the classic gable filled with the Wolfenbüttel arms; and the low flight of steps is guarded on either side by Minerva and Apollo, each with just a little eighteenth-century gallantry, as of china shepherds, grafted on the antique. Each also, besides the added flying draperies, with a coat of brown weather-stains and a fine green wig of lichen. An ancient butler bade us wait in the ground - floor apartments. Such beautiful rooms! The long French windows opening on to the autumnal garden, the ceilings delicately stuccoed, the straight-backed chairs ranged against the wainscot or set round card-tables, and the walls hung with smoky pictures. I was struck by the gallant air of this *Damenstift* gallery; nothing but concerts and boar-hunts and loves of gods and goddesses buried

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## Stiftsdamen

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in flowers. . . . The very portraits of the princesses of Brunswick and Wolfenbüttel looked oddly pagan for a retreat of high-born maiden ladies, with moons on their brows and peacocks by their side, and fluttered round by Cupids: Hampton Court beauties bursting luxuriant out of their bodices. Besides this gallery there were other reception-rooms, with yellow gardens reflected in their time-dimmed mirrors, and china shepherds and goddesses on their mantelpieces. And in the Chapter Room, hung with the full-length portrait of the wigged and mustachioed Duke who founded Stift Prüffening, was a fine musical clock, which the butler wound up in our honour. As it struck twelve a strange whirring began, which settled itself into the faltering, jangling notes of a spinet; a spinet long out of tune and stammering, you would say, under old, forgetful fingers, long dapper shakes and solemn Handelian closes; a tune tottering tinkling into the grave.

When the clock had ceased its performance, we were summoned to the presence of an aged *Stiftsfraülein* upstairs. She rose from near her stove in the wide-windowed room, and

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held us long by the hand, with uncertainty in her dear, weak, brown eyes. She was too deaf to hear strangers, and almost too blind to read what we wrote on slips of paper. But on a few leading themes she became very lively, and entertained us with pathetic humorousness about the *Stift* when first she entered it. There came in and out of her reminiscences the name, gradually the personality, of a certain abbess, deceased these sixty years and more, who was spoken of familiarly as *Die Glasenapp*. *Die Glasenapp* used to sit on a sofa in an Empire dress, a turban on her head, where an amethyst too huge to be real fastened a long sweeping plume. *Die Glasenapp* spent the summer days in a garden house called "Japan," and there imagined and related all manner of romances about her youth—the poet Platen had wooed her; and earlier even Salis, the shepherd poet whom we learn from German governesses as inevitably leashed to Mattison, had been her betrothed; a wonderful romance, and not a word of truth in it. The Glasenapp remained so passionately given to dancing that here in the *Damenstift*, having no other partner, she would teach minuets and quadrilles to her

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## Stiftsdamen

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maid, until one day, having aristocratically chidden her for not copying her movements with enough precision, she had occasion to fling her shoe at the maid's head, and the maid flung it back obediently at the exalted head of the lady abbess.

While the old *Stiftsfräulein* babbled out these stories, a polite collation was offered us—cups of chocolate, sweet, stiff, and mahogany brown, as if it had simmered by the fire fifty years; pieces of cake, pears, and grapes piled up like a *Nature Morte*; and a bottle of sweet Greek wine on the top of it all. When we had partaken we were sent to see the garden, the haunts of the Abbess Glasenapp.

Over the statues of the *perron* two venerable horse-chestnuts were shedding their leaves and fruit; the high hedges of hornbeam were tinged with orange; people were picking the abundant pears, which fell, some of them, into the tank of gold-fish. And the orange-trees and myrtles had been put away. We wandered a long time in the garden, losing ourselves on purpose in the hornbeam maze. All the windows of the beautiful old house were closed, the curtains drawn, and of the present abbess or the living



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*Stiftsdamen* not a trace! The ghost of *Die Glasenapp* reigned undisturbed, with her Empire dress and her turban and amethyst. We peeped through the windows of the summer-house called "Japan," with its high-backed chairs against the willow-pattern walls, and the sofa on which she had been throned. And we were shown the surviving one of two big French poplars, whom she had called, after her imaginary lovers, Platen and Salis. But the poplar Salis had long since been blown down!

We came away not without many a glance back at the high French attics, the stone vases on the gate-posts between the autumnal trees. And it is difficult to realize that I have not all my life long known the *Damenstift* of Prűffen-*ing*, and that *Die Glasenapp* has not always been a household word.

## “GOSLAR, ONCE IMPERIAL”

(*Wordsworth*)

**A**LTHOUGH quite unprepared for such weather in the still early autumn, and scolding a good deal against it (perhaps merely to heighten enjoyment), I confess that I did enjoy the piercing cold which met us at Goslar. It seemed quite fit and proper to be *eingehiezt* (for Germany thinks of this as warming you, not as lighting a fire) in those pagoda-atticks above the corsleted and bearded Emperors of the inn-front, with the autumn full moon shining ice-blue on the high shingle-slate roofs, and the carved turrets and gables, making their black-beam skeletons plain as in daylight, polishing also the golden eagle, barbaric, Byzantine, on the fountain of the market-place—the fountain whose trickling sounded so very cold in the still night! It has been good playing at winter a little in this dear little old town out of a fairy-story: Goslar,

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everything belonging to which seems made to be hung on one of the Christmas-trees which are the sole vegetation of its hillsides.

For instance, in the Gothic Rathhaus are two great chandeliers consisting in the antlers of huge stags, between whose horns are seated, one in each, two bearded, robed, and sceptred Emperors of coloured and gilded wood—the fathers, let us say, of the poor drowned lovers in the old German ballad of “The Two Kings’ Children.” Also the great silver-gilt tankard of the Guild of Miners (*Bergmänner*) is covered with manikins making music and with metal-working gnomes. And the sugarloaf-roofed guildhouse of the weavers (called *Brusttuch* or *Neckerchief*) is carved and gilded and painted with grotesques of fat children dancing with bears and learned pigs playing the hornpipe, and such-like devices. The great ring chandeliers also of this part of the world, one of which must have hung in the destroyed and vanished cathedral of this town of Goslar, look as if suggested by the hoops of lights encircling the skirts of a Christmas-tree. And as to that golden eagle swelling his breast and flapping his jagged wings and rearing his crown above the little

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## “Goslar, once Imperial”

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Byzantine spouting lions' heads of the fountain, why, whence could they have taken him save from a Christmas-tree's tip-top branch? Even the fine and well-preserved paintings of the Wohlgemuth school, story of the Virgin on the ceiling of that Imperial Council Chamber, and Emperors and Sibyls, two and two, all round, look, with their brilliant blues and reds, their white and twisting scrolls and gold Gothic framework, as if so many gigantic toy-books had been placed open side by side. A spruce fir, a Christmas-tree, is, it would seem, the emblem of this Harz region, meeting one everywhere at Goslar; and the first impression of Goslar, as I have said, is Christmas-treeish and fairy-bookish.

In the midst of this pleasant childishness one becomes gradually aware of a different note. There are the great, haggard figures of Christ, with streaming wounds and real matted hair and beard, in two strange almshouses, of which more anon, and in the chapel surviving from the cathedral; things left over from pre-Lutheran times, and forgotten in nooks and corners. Figures tragic at once and bogy; the Christ, one might say, reviled, beaten, outraged, crucified

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afresh, in the Black Mass of the Witches' Brocken Worship. For that is borne in upon one, little by little ; this childish fairy-tale town of Goslar is the metropolis of the witch district, the city where the Holy Roman Empire of the Othos and Henrys marches with the dominions of gnomes and dwarfs, of ghosts and warlocks. Where have I read it ? In Faust, in Heine, or in Keller's "Spiegel das Kätzchen" ? Or have I dreamed it ? That on Walpurgis Eve, and certain other ill-omened nights, the sky over this Harz town is black with whirring flights of witches and warlocks, as of starlings or wild-duck ; and that the burgesses pull their bed-clothes over their heads and shudder at the clamour of those unearthly birds. . . .

However this may be, I began to be haunted by the thought of all the thousands of poor women, moonstruck or slandered, whom the German cities tortured and burned throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ; and how all had been believed, and perhaps believed themselves, to have flown up these fir-clad valleys on to these peaceful hills. This thought has been lurking in my head and dodging me most of the time at Goslar. And it jumped

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## “Goslar, once Imperial”

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into distinctness when we went over the two old almshouses, Sanct Annen Stift and Heiligenkreuz, the first a walled and roofed-in bit of cobbly street, a chapel and a hall at once, surrounded by panelled stairs and balconies, on which the old ladies looked like so many Marthas ready for Mephistopheles ; the second a sinister place on the outskirts of the town, and near the site of that vanished cathedral, a great barn railed off inside, with unwholesome little cells all round, and great, grim, frightening figures of Christ—the ones I have alluded to—in damp, desecrated chapels ; and, besides these terrifying images, tenanted not by gossiping widows, but by oh ! such sad, poor, shivering old beggarwomen. Seminaries of Brocken-priestesses and broomstick-riders, crones and paupers, Sanct Annen and Heiligenkreuz !

Between it all, benign Christmas-tree and toy-book creatures and these other Harz-frequenters, Goslar is full of *Spuk*. But what haunts it most, or haunted my mind most while there, is that former cathedral. It got out of repair some ninety years ago, was pulled down, sold by auction, and had disappeared completely already when Heine, in his Göttingen days,

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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made his "Harz Reise." A wide sanded place, with a barracks on one side and a few old houses on the other, is all the trace of it, except, under some limes yellowing against the background of high fir-trees, a tiny chapel with sad Byzantine saints and kings in its gable, the porch or narthex of that departed church where the Saxon Emperors had come for coronation to Goslar. There is something that goes to the imagination in this vanished cathedral, far more than in any, however romantic, one still standing in other cities. An invisible sanctuary of ghosts, a ghost itself, its presence unseen but felt.

One of our last evenings, after an expedition into the fir-woods, my friend took me across the exercising-ground, to see Goslar from the first grassy heights. The sun had set some time—the sun which had shone without warning through the clear, cold north-wind day. And now it sent up a pale amber light into the pure sky, deepening to a faint orange, against which lay the mass of the little town, its towers and steeples dark blue, as if covered not merely with slate but with frozen mist. All around curved the impalpable hills, purple, blue, the lace of the

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## “Goslar, once Imperial”

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firs clear on the pale sky, or the sudden comb or hogged mane of a forest clearing, breaking their conical curves. And opposite the afterglow, warmer, more golden, with faint purple and trails of brown smoke mixed with it, shone the moon, pale yellow and cold like winter. Like winter almost, also, the thinned leaves of the little poplars and the willows delicately pencilled against that amber sky. The grass had become brown and golden with the sunset, and vague darkness surrounded our steps as we went, and rose slowly from the earth like a thin brown mist. We seemed to be encompassed gradually closer by the almost Italian lines of these magic Harz hills, volcanic and mysterious like the Euganeans, but fringed with firs and filled with the grotesque and terrible creatures of German wonderland. It was the hour of Faust and Wagner's return from the fields, and one expected the eerie poodle to appear and circle closer and closer. . . . The pointed towers and belfries of Goslar were still barely visible.



## WERNIGERODE

SOME of the pleasantest episodes of travel are surely what at first sight look like its failures. There is a virtue in short-commons ; and we extract finer pleasure from one indifferent good thing, where such are scarce, than from profusion which so often chokes up the avenues to our heart. And have we not, oftener than we foolishly care to confess, lacked in Venice or Siena the little pricking sense of picturesqueness elicited by the unexpected sight of some square box of Queen Anne brickwork between the cedars of a London suburb ?

The Genius Loci, as I have tried to hint without incurring sacrilege, is an elusive and capricious divinity, scared by elaborate ritual, and delighting to flout self-righteous worshippers ; moreover, slipping away and re-appearing as variously metamorphosed as old

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## Wernigerode

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Proteus when indiscreetly invited to prophesy. The Genius of Localities reappears occasionally in the last shape one might expect : that of the book, nay, of the friend you were equally able to enjoy without coming to foreign parts at all. And rightly. . . . But of this particular point anon, and, for the moment, let me explain where and what Wernigerode is.

Where it is may be summed up by the fact that, witchcraft and broomsticks having been abolished by the German Emperor, Wernigerode is the terminus of the funicular railway which now conveys enlightened and practical Teutons, of the sort described as *Bath-guests*, up the Brocken. *What it is* constituted our first disappointment on that autumn Harz Reise : to wit, the *Residenz* of a mediatised microscopic Serenity, who lives in a cardboard feudal castle on a hill and once had over-lordship over the Brocken region. By the way, the witches and warlocks, coming regularly at certain seasons, and certainly *personally conducted* (though not by Mr. Cook), may be considered after all as only a more antiquated kind of Bath-guest. . . . There is also a Hof-Apotheke at Wernigerode, with the Golden Stags of the

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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Serene Harz-Princes Stollberg; and a Hof-Kirche, also with the Golden Stags of the aforesaid Serenities; and a few genteel little cocked-hat houses, evidently of the Serenities' ministers, generals, and mistresses-in-chief, always before the present enlightened and energetic German Empire had been dreamed of.

The rain (and perhaps a foolish final shrink-  
ingness) having prevented our embarking for the Brocken on the funicular railway, we spent our morning taking stock of these various *rewarding see-worthinesses* (lohnende Sehwürdigkeiten) of Wernigerode. In the afternoon we turned our steps to the fir-woods, with on their skirts, on the slopes of dewy grass, great isolated trees with hanging branches. In the gaps of the forest were misty views of hills, and of the red town roofs, the red castle turrets filling the valley. The cry of a jay or twitter of a finch, sounds few and far between, made one feel but the more the inconceivable silence and stillness of the woods in the cold, pale autumn light. "Über alle Gipfel is Ruh"—one kept repeating, and the rest of those divinely deep lines.

It was already late when we went up the Arme Leute Berg—"Poor Folks' Hill," perhaps

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## Wernigerode

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in memory of some Franciscan settlement. And dusk overtook us before we could get very far, though we got, indeed, very soon to places which felt very remote—woods upon woods, and, in their gaps, misty hills, also wood-clad. We came back down a high road in the twilight; the great fir-plantations on either side, with the purple dusk beneath them. Came down walking quickly in the air which felt like distant snow, the road making great bends in the darkness; and suddenly, through the firs, appeared the first lights of the town below. Walked with the sense of romance, of arrival after a journey, of something which made us think of Prince Otto, how he too walked through the forests. And found ourselves suddenly in the lit streets, on the relentless cobbles of the Residenz. The castle, misty, half lit up, vaguely turreted and towered, had suddenly loomed in a gap among the firs. Our conversation had been, quite naturally, of Stevenson and the romantic parts of Meredith. And certainly this seemed, not afterwards only but at the time, an adventure; and therefore was one. That evening it rained again, with something in the rain telling of the first snowfall

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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on the Harz peaks. We had, as usual, venison and cranberries for supper ; and, having lit the porcelain stove, read the classic Walpurgis Night and Faust's Death in the twopenny edition.

I have alluded to certain Protean disguises of the Genius Loci ; some of the finest pleasures of travel being found, as at Wernigerode, in a place offering no interest whatever. Nor is this all (and Wernigerode leads me to think of it) : the Genius Loci, as already hinted, will transform himself into the book we had brought in our bag—nay, more astonishing still (and apart from all the higher phantasmagoria of love and first-flushing friendship), into our fellow-traveller. Dost thou remember, dear old companion on many journeys before the abortive Brocken-gang, that evening in the little inn—Deutsche Haus it was called—at Wernigerode ? The fir splinters crackling and smelling of resin, the rain against the windows, and us two happy over the second part of “Faust,” and then, for comparison, the opening of “Hamlet” ? Or, a few evenings later, on that same North German journey, another inn—Golden Purse this time—at Dessau, where thou didst minister to my chilled body and soul (a cold contracted,

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## Wernigerode

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as thou knowest, at Quedlinburg, and lasting disgracefully through the whole Bach-feast at Leipzig)—with temperate punch and the “Letters of Goethe and Bettina”? Was the punch really as hot and as fragrant of lemon? Are those letters really so marvellous a brew of finest lyrism, humour, and romance? Moreover, which seems less certain, are we really as delightful people, both of us, as young, fervid, and yet mature with deepest wisdom, as much partaking of all the finest qualities of Goethe and Bettina turn about, as we seemed to ourselves that evening in that dull hotel?

Alas! we are, habitually, none of us one-half as interesting or appreciative, or wise, or childish, as lovable and loving—in a word, as happy—as we have it in us to be. And the dear Spirit of Localities, taking our shape by turns (as mocking elves were wont), did, after all, perhaps merely reveal our real self to ourselves and each other. And surely that is one of the most interesting recollections we can bring back from foreign travel.

## GOETHE AT WEIMAR

**W**HAT may I say of the Goethe-house at Weimar? It is, very evidently, haunted ; but to my mind less by the effulgent spirit of the Great One, than by the dismal ghost of that cracky, lantern-jawed grandson, he of the black plastered lock and strapped duck pantaloons and general woebegone elegance of the Musset and Heine period ; the grandson who, after having had the unbearable honour of playing the piano (as a picture shows him) with the immortal grandsire at his elbow, and, far worse ! of doing his lessons at a desk in the study where God Wolfgang (as Heine called him) sat writing and sorting his minerals, seems to have pined away from sheer oppression ever after, shrunk into the garret of that Olympian house. He dwindled away there for seventy-odd years, taking up less and less room, spending

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## Goethe at Weimar

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less and less money, until he devised a lantern in the door between his two attics, and thus reduced his claims on the world to one single tallow-candle instead of two !

And there is something about the big, stately house, where the Immortal One had received all the minor Olympians, or their homage, which makes one feel why that grandson gradually left it to the portraits of the Friends and the Sweet-hearts, and to the Plaster-casts (gathering a garment of sooty dust), which seem in some hieratic relation to the busts and paintings and prints and silhouettes of that Man-God, portrayed at every age, and with every unlikeliness of smirk and frown, from the eye-flashing aquiline youth with locks tied back in a bag, half-Werther, half-Wilhelm Meister, through every variety of Goethe travelling through life with Roman ruins or grand ducal palaces as background, to Goethe in all the different forbiddingnesses of old age. Forbidding, but not enough, alas ! for the sycophancies of Eckermann, the theatricalities of Byron, the shakable sentimental conceit of Jane Welsh Carlyle, who sends him a copy of verses and (of all embarrassing untidy presents) a long tail of "a



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woman's hair." (Faugh ! ) There he presides, variously Olympian, over the dreary 1820 wall-papers and sofas and card-tables, key-patterned or sham Gothic, but all faded and dust-engrained; among the dismal collections of ores and crystals and skulls and stuffed birds : a pantalooned and stocked and swallow-tailed *Rentier* Faust. And round him that court of huge blackened casts, Ludovisi Junos and Rondanini Joves, and various decapitated Adorantes and Ilioneuses ; that other company of faded ladies, stomachered or short-waisted, Lottes and Lilis and Maximilianes and Christianes, Suleikas, Gretchens, and Ottilies, on whose love and love for him (as on the succulent roast ox-thighs of Homeric days) the god Wolfgang nourished and increased his own divinity.

How could the poor, pomatum-locked, faintly moustachioed, wasp-waisted grandson have done otherwise than pine and dwindle when left alone among all this ? He, conscious of his chicken-breasted coat and thin strap-pantalooned legs and dejected, limp look, and of being nothing, nothing, nothing in the whole world save the bearer of an Olympian name, the miserable remnant people turned round to stare at, saying,

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## Goethe at Weimar

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“the grandson of Goethe.” One can fancy that the only comfort may have come, the only sense of sympathy, and (who knows ?) perhaps the only sense of something to imitate, from the washed-out pastel of baby-faced young Jerusalem—he who was told off by Fate to sit for Werther and blow his poor brains out in order to suggest a masterpiece.

O house of Goethe, wherein such mighty things were thought and felt and written ; Olympian residence two stories high, with back garden and coachhouse—how hast thou become the home of dust, of dreariness, and of that grandson lighting his one dip in the lantern between two garrets !

In such a place the commonplace human spirit (at least the spirit of this commonplace human *myself*) rebels, becomes incapable of realizing one single item of Goethe’s real greatness, incapable of recollecting one single chapter or line which ever stirred or delighted, and falls inevitably to summing up the various chances and mechanisms by which such Olympian positions have been achieved ; with corresponding speculative deductions as : What would this immortal Goethe have been, by how much the

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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less immortal if born in 1849 instead of 1749—if, if, if, &c., &c., &c.? with strange and disquieting generalizations on the *adventitious circumstances necessary for canonization*, the *royal roads to apotheosis*, and so forth. But stop! such thoughts are really too . . . Only let me record one further reminiscence of the Goethe-house at Weimar. Here it is. Among those naturalist's collections which add so much to the dusty and dismal grandeur of the place, there is, over a door, a glass case with three stuffed birds of uncertain species; two of these—like all moth-eatable objects in that residence of the illustrious dead—are largely moth-eaten. But one, the middle one, is reduced to absolute bare bones, and sits, with skeleton wings outspread and skeleton breast blown out, triumphant on his cardboard oak-tree. This ghostly volatile is emblematic of the feelings inspiring and inspired by that Goethe-house, particularly after you have taken note of the great new building, like a bank, inscribed "Goethe-Archiv," where "Goethe students" seek glory or emolument, or "Doktoren These" in the love-letters and account-books of the poet. Like that symbolic bird, a genius was once a living, soaring,

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## Goethe at Weimar

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splendidly plumaged or fearfully taloned creature—an eagle, or a nightingale, or a noble swan dying in song; and then, instead of allowing the nimble ants and decorous beetles to make an end of him—invisible, forgotten, under the autumn leaves and the pine-needles—the Fates decree that he shall be immortal, replace gizzard and heart with sawdust and cotton-wool, and set him up to catch the dust through the chinks of a glass case, until, year by year for a hundred years, the little patient, bloodless mites reduce him to a preposterous skeleton, spreading bony pinions and gazing with glass eyes out of a fleshless skull.

Having spent the morning in seeing these mournful things and thinking these painful thoughts, we comforted ourselves with coffee and apple-cake on the terrace of the dear rococo Schlösschen of Belvedere. After a week of rain and cold it was a radiant autumn day. When we descended, after walking about among the orange-trees, and big myrtles in tubs, and the yellowing hornbeam side-scenes of the open-air theatre, the sunshine was lying low and golden between the fan-like leaves of the avenue of immense horse-chestnuts and on

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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the stacked oats of the shimmering stubble beyond. It was all so enjoyable. But the forenoon's pilgrimage had left in our soul a gritty sense of duty, as of the dust swallowed in that sanctuary. "Do not forget Goethe's garden-house," we said to the cabman, not without a secret hope that we might already have left it behind us in our drive across Weimar park. I do not like parks ; but Weimar park is not like one. There is marshy grass about the stream, and a screen of poplars ; and quite a nice common high-road separates the meadows from a hillside, among whose trees you see or guess an occasional pleasant, deep-roofed, eighteenth-century country-house. And such a house, only smaller, stands free from the beeches, in a long strip of garden above the road ; a square, white pavilion, espaliered with vines.

"Goethe's Gartenhäuschen," said the driver, and bid us push open the wicket and enter without more ado ; so we entered and went upstairs. What a relief beyond all telling ! No portraits, no plaster-casts, no inscriptions, no glass-cases ; not a trace of that immortal the effigies and thought of whom had overshadowed

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## Goethe at Weimar

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our morning. Save for the purity and pathos of long emptiness, it might have been the house of anybody. Any pleasant burgher or disabused courtier of some hundred and odd years back might have been its owner ; retiring thither for week-ends to read and meditate, and prune the roses, and train the vines, with but a single servant to cook for him, or at the most a half-dozen chosen friends, walked over from the town on frosty sunny mornings, or on summer nights, to share a meal. There would be trout from that stream, a bit of game, vegetables and fruit grown in the garden, a cold pie brought as a present from Weimar perhaps, and a bottle or two of hock out of the little cellar, discussed along with philosophy and seasoned with classic quotations, by the French fireplace, or under the trellis, by the row of tall sweet sultan, when the summer sun stood high. There would be talk of art—the writings of Abbé Winckelmann perhaps—and of things of Italy. For the hermit of the Gartenhäuschen has travelled as well as read. There on the walls are the big prints of Rome, with its monuments complete, St. Peter's dome, the Forum's clustered columns, Caecilia Metella, and the pines of Villa

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Borghese, and Cardinal's coaches quite tiny, with footmen hanging behind ; all bird's-eye, and flourished round about with dedications to *Eminentissimi*. Also a plan of how Rome once was, antique Rome, where Horace and Virgil and Ovid and Propertius had wandered, and he of the Gartenhäuschen, with his sweethearts disguised under antique names, had followed them in reality (or in elegiacs only) "fröhlich ins Leben hinein."

But, as those distiches rise to my lips, it suddenly comes over me that those lines, the whole Roman Elegies, may have been, not read or repeated, but composed under these hornbeam arbours, written at yonder spindle-legged table, with the Capodimonte goddess on the inkstand. . . . Roman Elegies ! Toys ! Why, this desk has held the sheets of "Wilhelm Meister" and "Faust ;" and there, in the garden, while stooping to weed away the grasses which the meadows have sent up among the mignonette and sweet sultan, there may have come to him the tune, the initial lines of those songs which are more passionate and deep than all the music, even Schubert's, ever set to them.

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## Goethe at Weimar

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Hero-worship is no mere vanity. A great man—nay, merely a great man's name, his poor, frail, or fatuous living reality, his letters, house, or former belongings—can give us, like some odd wizard's contrivance, the shock, the overwhelming emotion, the superposed composite images, the very essence of all that is most potent in his creations. And we receive, close-packed like our own brain-cells, distilled and warm like our own heart's-blood, the value of all Mozart's songs and quartets and symphonies in one battered, tarnished button off his waistcoat in the Salzburg Mozarteum ; and here the poignancy and radiance of all Goethe's work, his intellectual serenity, and splendid rhetoric, and laconic lyric pathos, from the bare walls and scanty furniture of the little garden-house.

But, like all other divinities, the illustrious spirits thus evoked in our own soul have different boons for different worshippers. And so it was with me in Goethe's garden-house. What touched me most was not the table on which he had written, nor the curtains embroidered for him by Frau von Stein. It was, hanging over his little travelling bedstead, a



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large flat basket of marsh-grass (the Italian word for it is *sporta*), such as unsophisticated cooks carry to market in the South. That he should have brought back just this basket seems so human and touching, opening vistas of the kind of memories he, like some others among us, would clutch at: mornings in Verona market-place, and such-like. Or perhaps the basket had held the last oranges he picked in that South he would never revisit. Or humble Italian provisions on some autumn jaunt among the criss-cross vines, the clipped mulberry-trees of an osteria on the Aventine, where fragments of carved marble and bits of fluted column lay about in the artichokes; that day when, sipping the sweet, yellow wine, his soul was steeped in the anguish of leaving Rome, the anguish of that worse than any human parting, for which he found no adequate words of his own, but only those heartrending distiches of Ovid—

“Quum subit illius tristissima noctis imago,  
Quae mihi supremum tempus in urbe fuit”—

and the rest.

That *sporta* ! It brought Goethe nearer my

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## Goethe at Weimar

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own heart than any thought of his human loves, real or imaginary, which arose with the scent of the autumn beech-leaves underfoot, and of that long row of sweet sultan outside the garden-house.

## THE BRAHMS-FEST AT MEININGEN

**T**HOSE days at Meiningen, barely over, yet already so distant (for I am writing from Trent, with the sense of return to Italy strong upon me), have had, music apart, a very peculiar and clinging kind of charm.

The notion of celebrating the unveiling of a monument to Brahms by the most perfect performance Germany could give, not merely of his own chief works, but of a number of great works by Brahms's greatest German predecessors, was surely a delicate and noble one ; and the realization thereof had a dignified, intimate serenity of glad emotion, veiled and restrained by the thought of death, which made one think of the passage in Dante where Virgil—whom in many ways Brahms seems to resemble—is welcomed into the company of the other great dead poets.

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## The Brahms-fest at Meiningen

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Nor could a fitter place than Meiningen have been invented, apart from the fact of its possessing one of the finest orchestras in Germany, and of its princes having been personal friends of the dead composer. It is a tiny place, scarce more than a big village, although the capital of a Saxon duchy, in a narrow grassy valley, the steep slopes of the Thuringian forest encroaching on either side. The greater part of it was destroyed early this century by fire (although we had the signal good fortune to lodge in a beautiful seventeenth-century house, with plaster theological virtues over the doorway); and yet, with its high-pitched red roof and many-windowed house-fronts, and its funny schloss, half Versailles and half Nürnberg, it has an infinitely old-world air. Bismarck and Karl Marx and Wagner have lived for it apparently in vain; and it belongs to that dear Germany presided over (under innumerable princelets) by Goethe and Schiller—the Germany which has helped, thank goodness! to make us all a wee bit romantic. As if to carry out this impression the place was decorated for the festival, not with arches and garlands and gas-jets, but, under the red and black drooping flags, merely with small green

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Christmas-trees, stuck in the pavement, and smelling of fairy tales. The right Germany for Bach and Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, and also, surely, for Brahms.

The commemoration began, after two days of public rehearsals, by the performance in the principal church of Brahms's German Requiem. The church, rebuilt in days of Schlegel and Tieck, with yellow tile spires in what they call "Romantic style," stands in the market-place ; and there was something pleasant and genuine in the fact that while some thousand persons collected all over Germany were slowly entering for the ceremony, the market women went on selling their bread and cabbages and plums under the lime-trees, and the long ladder wag-gons drawn by yellow cows, rumbled along with loads of hay and firewood.

I do not know any other Requiem with half the solemn tenderness of this, which Brahms wrote for his mother. The words, for one thing, pieced together out of the Old and New Testaments, by the composer himself, are of a different character altogether from the terrible and dramatic words of the Latin liturgy : there is nothing about the Day of Judgment, or hell,

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## The Brahms-fest at Meiningen

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or terrors of individual souls. The only thing one would wish for out of the Latin is the equivalent of the initial verse : "Requiem æternam dona eis, domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis." And by a curious coincidence, the whole of Brahms's setting seems but the expression, the varied expansion, of this thought. This music asserts one constant consoling belief : that what we love endures, and cannot perish. This *Lux Perpetua* is broken up as in teeming constellations and galaxies of love and glory, spreading over all human experience like the soul-composed stars of Dante's heaven. This *Lux Perpetua* shines mild and clear in those wonderful upward passages, those delicate wheels and ladders of sounds ; above all, in those notes of the treble solo, placed, as with steady hands ; full, single notes, palpitating star-like, or rather opening out slowly, as the planets do in the evening, against the multifold restful darkness of the other voices.

I confess that when the crowd streamed silently out after the Requiem, I could not bring myself to follow it, through the street set with Christmas-trees, to the unveiling of the monument to Brahms, although I felt sure that the sculptor

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Hildebrand would say noteworthy things, and Dr. Joachim charming and dignified ones, and that the whole little ceremony would be sincere and kindly. But the chords of the Requiem, that wonderful return, at the end, of the divine opening phrase, "Selig sind die Todten," seemed to isolate one from even the nicest living people ; and I climbed up, alone, through the ducal park to the woods above Meiningen. Woods, first of every loveliest orange and russet and delicate lilac serenity ; and then, on the hill-top, of close-set pines, in the grass under which grow tufts, wet with frost, of pure blue Alpine gentian. On, up and down, along more woods of pine and larch, and then of the real German spruce fir, close and mysterious in the autumn mists ; squirrels crossing the path and jays rising screeching from the bushes ; a country without much view, with no beauty of line, almost ugly, but of infinite intimate romance.

The ceremony of the unveiling had been, I was told by my friends, all that it should be. The piece of poetry, by some local celebrity, had a pleasant Schiller-like ring, and a Schiller-like sentiment in the insistence, not so much on the genius of the dead master, as on the fact

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## The Brahms-fest at Meiningen

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that but for premature death he might still have been with his Meiningen friends, himself directing his music. And in Dr. Joachim's really beautiful speech there was a characteristic German allusion to Brahms's love of nature, to the excursions on foot which he had ever loved to make through the hilly and woodland districts of his country. But it was not till two days later, when public curiosity had a little subsided, that I found my way, just before the Joachim concert, to the Brahms monument in the ducal park. Although long acquainted with Adolf Hildebrand's genius, not merely for plastic form, but for monumental, and, in a way, suggestive fitness, I was surprised and charmed by the work and the place. The monument is a longish semicircular bench with rounded back, of a model not uncommon in Roman villa gardens, with a little low fountain at either end, and the bust of the great composer in the middle. And what it stands in, under the trees, is a tiny churchyard, or rather a part of the park which has blossomed out into old, old tombs, with tender and romantic eighteenth-century inscriptions. Broken pillars and urns and flat tombs with cherub heads,



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the autumnal trees roofing them over, and the yellow leaves raining continuously down, covering them as with blossom, where the tender green moss had not covered already their allegorical sculptures and escutcheons.

The park was empty in the frosty, sunny morning ; and the monument of the Master—a monument not merely to a great man, but to a dear friend—seemed to have long taken its place among the other tombstones in the grass, among the inscriptions dating from that noble and gentle time of Goethe and Schiller, of Beethoven and Schubert. The sky was clear, the frost still on the grass, the sunlight pale yellow through the branches ; and, in the mood awakened by the music of the preceding days, this little bit of wood, with the theatre, full of music and romance, at one end, and this sentimental, modest graveyard at the other, seemed to sum up, in the autumn weather, the German, half-Christian, half-classic feeling of immortality—the immortality which Brahms has promised mankind in his Requiem.

## THE SCOTTISH CHURCH AT RATISBON

**W**E arrived at Regensburg, which our fathers called Ratisbon, in the late afternoon. The rain had ceased, but it had not properly cleared up. The wet roofs showed the dark brown and yellow of their round tiles ; the cobbles before the inn the same sad-coloured mixture. The moist air was full of the smell of breweries, and curls of smoke hung between the church towers all round. When we walked out after supper there was something oppressive in the absolute darkness and silence, and the perpetual churches and chapels at every opening in those streets.

The next day there was High Mass at the Cathedral ; gold altars blazing under splendid green and scarlet mediæval glass ; choirs of solemn priests ; and, above all, Palestrina music sung with a perfection unknown to the Sixtine

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Chapel. And Regensburg began to exercise the fascination which, perhaps owing to my childish years in Pio Nono's Rome, the ritual of Catholicism always has for me.

I fear—indeed, I know!—that this feeling is by no means satisfactory to my dear Catholic friends. But, then, *theirs* is not satisfactory to me. And in their attempt to make it into something modern and morally workaday, in their contention of spiritual meaning and revealed excellence, there seems to me a lack of appreciation, irreverence almost, towards this marvellous idol fashioned in the image of all man's longings, carved and gilded and set with jewels through successive ages, and kissed and fingered as rocks are kissed and fingered by the sea, by the strength and weakness of generations of men. What can a priest know of this? Or, guessing, how can he preach it? He may never admit, even if he feel, the majesticalness of this master-work of human genius and human sorrows.

To such as share the feeling in question, Ratisbon must have the same sort of charm as parts of Rome; with the advantage that there is not here anything to disturb the

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## The Scottish Church at Ratisbon

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attention, nor any of that official indiscretion which checks emotion in the capital of Latin Christianity. The churches, size for size, are even more numerous than in Rome. At every corner, every crossing, sometimes two in one little square, sometimes two back to back. And when one thinks to have done with churches, behold ! an open door in a house, and people kneeling in an unsuspected chapel ! Churches so familiar, so domestic, tucked away, only their great rude Romanesque towers revealing them (with the tall chimneys of ecclesiastical breweries alongside) among the high-pitched many-atticked roofs. Churches, in this most tortuous of towns, here, there, and everywhere ; not to be found again (or their doors become suddenly unopenable), like the lumber-rooms of some rambling old house, or the chambers hidden in the belfries and clerestories and apses of some huge, barnacled-over church itself. Churches most often shut and accessible only through back doors and *Messner's* keys, enclosing cubic yards of the air of past centuries. Churches hoisted, like the cathedral, on a footstool of their steep steps, or sunk, like the Erhardtgrube, below the level of the street. Churches with inconceivably shaped

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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windows, round, triangular, bulbous, and with towers varying from the fortress to the pagoda. Churches of no ascertainable date, but in which one guesses something immensely old.

There are some which have still their melancholy old rood-screen and nightmare Romanesque sculptures ; but their basilical pillars are encased in plaster, their narthex turned round into a conventual choir, and the whole will be crammed with the maddest seventeenth- and eighteenth-century stucco and gilding. Of these the Emerams-Kirche is the type ; Emeram, patron saint of amateur firemen, for he holds a ladder and bucket. It was the church of a great Benedictine abbey, and has been, all through the ages, the noblest church of Ratisbon. But Bavarian dukes, emperors and empresses, and knights in fifteenth-century armour, have been poked away into damp corners, to let the place flower out in rococo splendour. There are not merely stucco coloured saints in Louis XIV. stage costumes gesticulating overhead, and a coloured stucco Madonna on a moon, a heavenly Queen of Night singing roulades ; but also stucco vases with stucco palms and stucco roses flowering on the entablature ; with stucco

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## The Scottish Church at Ratisbon

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capitals bursting into flower-wreathed, smiling ladies. I will not speak of Cupids, coloured natural, floating among solid stucco vapours. Surely such a gallant church was never seen before ! And alongside of the high altar, at the height of a first floor, two great white and gold Louis XV. state pews, glazed in like Spanish balconies to serenade under. But, to recall the delighted soul to austere thoughts, behold ! high up, by a window, a coloured figure of a religious person praying devoutly, so naturally as to make one jump back startled. Nor is the Emerams-Kirche wanting for appropriate relics. Indeed, of all the saints or portions of saints (for saintliness causes you to be shredded and kept in minute fragments among cotton-wool and paper flowers) I have ever seen enjoying posthumous elegance and splendour, St. Maximilianus, here exposed to pious eyes, is certainly the most splendidly elegant. He is habited in gold and silver cloth, cut after the Roman manner, but with a certain pastoral grace, as in the bows at knees and shoulders ; a delicate little skeleton saint, no bigger than a child, reclining with easy dignity upon one elbow, with bony hand outstretched. A

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well-deserved crown adorns his refined skull ; and where his eyes and lips have been are neat little loops of pearls and diamonds. . . .

The dignitaries of the Holy Roman Empire, what time the Diet sat at Ratisbon : Electors, Princes, Archbishops, Mitred Abbots, Margraves, Rhinegraves, Wildgraves, and the rest, with their suite of aulic councillors, aulic notaries, aulic apothecaries, dwarfs, fiddlers, and negro lacqueys, must have held this relic of St. Maximilian (if a whole skeleton can be called a relic ?) in very great reverence. Nor any less devout to St. Maximilian, I take it, those Scots Lords and other adherents of the Stuarts whose epitaphs we read in the Church of St. James in this city. . . .

The Scottish nation had had their church at Ratisbon, a rude basilical one, of any age of barbarism, already in the sixteenth century. The tombstones of the abbots of the adjoining monastery date no further back (the Scotch names begin with a Dominus Ninian, Professor of Theology) ; so it seems likely that Ratisbon became a centre of Scottish Popery, a little subsidiary Rome, halfway to the great one, after the Reformation. Among the abbots

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## The Scottish Church at Ratisbon

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are a Stuart, a Galley Leigh, a Henderson, an Arbuthnot. How far to come and die in odour of sanctity from the Tweed to the Danube !

I would not waste my sympathy on these Northern Papists and Jacobites. The Scottish soul has resources of self-complacence unknown to feebler, though cognate, races. Also, as was once pointed out to me by the descendant of one of them, a Jacobite lord was perhaps less to be pitied on going into exile, even exile at Ratisbon, than (through the clemency of George III.) on returning to his native pepper-pots by the links or square stone box above the brown, sad moorland stream, with no neighbour for miles and not a lemon to make punch with. All this is true. And yet those exiles now buried in St. James's Church must have longed for their country when banished from it, and whistled ditties unknown to German organists but meaning strangely much to them, as they came from doing honour to St. Maximilian of the diamond eyes, and, passing under the city gate, stopped upon the bridge to watch the Danube, glacier green, flowing to countries further and further away, like their own lives, from Scotland.



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Such vague Scotch tunes, or the emotions thereof, were in my memory, with this thought of possible Masters of Ballantrae and Red-gauntlets, as we also crossed that Danube bridge.

It is presided over by some kind, bearded Gothic emperor, perhaps Henry the Fowler, holding a bird on his wrist, with that afternoon a real bird perched on his blackened stone shoulder ; and the country beyond seems under his pleasant protection ; better, methinks, than St. Maximilian's ! We followed the banks to a ferry over a lovely little tributary of the Danube. An old woman took us across its deep glassy waters, brandishing a long green paddle like that of Bernini's river-gods. Beyond was a white church, *Maria-hilf*, hung round inside with wax arms and legs and votive tablets : "Mary has helped." An old lime-tree in flower made the sweet evening sweeter ; the sunlight was broken among the sedge. Down the dark Danube, black among mists, rose the many church roofs and towers of Ratisbon.

## PRAGUE AND THE PRINCESS

WHEN the last organ chords of High Mass had echoed out in the gloomy magnificence of that fortress and hill cathedral, the sacristan unlocked the sanctuary of St. Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia. These three autumn days at Prague have been, save for a few sunset gleams, as black as London; and when the chapel doors of green Byzantine bronze were opened it was at first difficult to perceive anything beyond a vague shimmering splendour. As our eyes grew accustomed to the twilight those shining walls seemed to gather themselves, to curdle into faint figures of saints, rigid and mournful like Russian eikons. Only, instead of being painted on mere gold, they loomed among great *tesserae* of precious stone, irregular nuggets of jasper, of root of amethyst and root of garnet, and some kind of wonderful *prase*,

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pale luminous grass-green ; lumps of gem-stuff set into a cement of gold as flints are set into the mortar of an English church. Upstairs in the sacristy there were presses full of vestments cut out of wedding dresses of German Empresses and Bohemian Queens ; and no end of jewels, from the antiques set as knobs on Byzantine crosses and crowns to the rings of eighteenth-century Cardinals. But what was such Western magnificence compared with the Aladdin-walls of that Wenzel Chapel, telling, it seemed, of some Europe eastward of any I knew before, of Muscovy—who knows?—of Samarkand and Bokhara. That was the one bit of the Prague I had expected, of the *real* Prague ; for did not the Kremlin towers and cupolas of the citadel turn into mere modern imitation when the fog had cleared away from the river-banks and one had climbed the palace hill ?

As regards Prague itself, I had not, indeed, built it beforehand in my imagination, as I have built other towns, quite solidly set down by their river, or piled up, with clearly seen valleys and viaducts, on their rows of hills. But ever since my childhood the mere name of Prague had

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## Prague and the Princess

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awakened emotions of mystery and wonder, only the more potent for being, so to speak, a mere disembodied essence ; a shapeless perfume of romance. One has to pay, occasionally, for such imaginary raptures ; and heaven knows we have paid for them during these three dreary, chilly autumn days in the Prague which exists outside the fancy.

But, of course, even here (and because we had utterly ceased to expect it) we have had an adventure ; and, of course, as was proper, on the eve of departure. This afternoon, having disconsolately dragged our bicycles along muddy tramlines crowded with drays, and gaunt, unfinished streets and mangy playgrounds garnished with dustheaps, we subsided to coffee and sponge-cake on a promenade terrace overlooking the town and the river. The gravel was strewn with singed lime leaves, the coffee was grounds, and the sponge-cake was sand. But from that height, and in the reddened afternoon mists, the city took an odd look, with its snaking quays and its many domed churches, of Rome seen from the Janiculum ; the Prague of our fancy, the *real* Prague began to take body for our eyes. And when we were refreshed and a

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little comforted, we bicycled along the low, half-built-over hills in the direction of the citadel. The weather, as I have said, had been intolerably gloomy, though not actually raining ; but the sky opened at sunset, and the dust and powdered brickbat of the unfinished roads gathered in ambrosial halos round the trees, round the towers and cupolas, the triumphal eighteenth century gables of the palace, and the cathedral spires and gargoyles and flying buttresses.

It was already dusk, the willows in the dried moat a uniform dark silver, as we crossed the former drawbridge of the Hradschin, and passed under its gate-towers into the silent emptiness of the immense, the more than Vatican-huge, yards of the palace.

The thought of St. Wenzel's Chapel and how its encrusted amethyst and chrysoprase might look under flickering taper-lights, drew us to the cathedral, and, with a faint hope of some evening service, we tried the handle of the apse door in vain. When, sudden, there appeared, as if out of the pavement and the twilight, a lady, dressed in grey, veiled (or at least wearing a veil), who accosted us in English with a

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## Prague and the Princess

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courteous offer to get the cathedral opened for us. . . . On my demurring that it was too late to disturb the verger, she turned to my companion, conversing in very good English, asking whence we came. From Oxford—doubtless also from London? And how did we like Prague? For her own part, she owned, she found it melancholy, and very much preferred England. . . . She had visited that country some years ago, and stayed—did we know those cities?—at Birkenhead and Eastbourne. She seemed reluctant to part from us, and, as old travellers express it, offered us all manner of civilities. A certain grave suavity in her manner, and also her interest in England, had led my slow and prosaic wits to hold her for a governess *de bonne maison*. But my fellow-traveller, who did the talking while I merely listened, and who is, quite incontestably, possessed of deeper knowledge on all romantic matters, as befits a constant student of Meredith and Stevenson, declares that no such thing: that the lady evidently disposed of great power in those palace precincts; one sentry, at all events, seemed to present arms to her, so that it is probable she was some distracted princess, some archduchess suspected

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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of *mésalliance* and confined within the walls of that great, empty, half-sacerdotal fortress-palace. Indeed, to one initiate in such cases, the mere cut of her lace veil, long and unusually loose, could leave no doubt of her high rank and mysterious misfortunes. So my old friend says, and said. And, as the last sunset-red faded behind the triumphal stucco gables, the Muscovite cupolas, and the gargoyles and pinnacles of the Hradschin, while the first lights of the town and bridges pricked orange through the lilac mist below, I felt the force of these arguments, and admitted that the lady must be some Serenity at the least, and certainly an ill-used one. . . .

As we walked down the steep terraces, which, together with those immense empty yards and endless palaces, give the hill also of Prague an odd Roman air, we met, in the crowded streets near the bridge, a band of men handcuffed with little chains and padlocks, and escorted by two of those Austrian soldiers who, with their narrow dressing-gown, spurs, and pointed cap, look for all the world like Emperor Palæologus on his medals. This sight evoked in my mind the thought of what this decent, manufacturing

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## Prague and the Princess

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Austria had but so recently stood for: old gentlemen who told of Spielberg and *casemattes* at Mantua and *carbonari* hanged in gangs at Venice; also of an uncle of mine, seen to fall before Cracow, and of whom, thirty years later, after the amnesties, fellow-prisoners reported the death in a Hungarian fortress. Bands of prisoners, and not electric trams—these were the things one might expect to get out of the way of in Prague, at least as I had dreamed of it. And as we pushed our bicycles along the foggy, lighted streets, and over the bridge where statues of woeful saints loomed like ill-omened birds above the black water and its yellow reflections, I felt quite satisfied that the lady who had accosted us in the Hradschin-square was not a Fräulein but some distracted Archduchess.





**BOOK II**  
**ITALY**



## OF ROADS

**W**HAT strange things roads are !  
rivers made by human hands,  
down which flow language, art,  
customs, civilization, and our  
own fancy, if we have any !

Opposite us, the only thing we ever clearly saw among those highest Apennine peaks veiled and unveiled by mists, was a road winding most precipitously among the crags.

“The Bacciocca’s road ; *la strada della Bacciocca*,” said the guide.

She made it, Napoleon’s sister Elisa (“the Bacciocca,” the old people call her here), as a short cut from her little upstart Courts of Lucca and Massa, to Modena, Lombardy, and Eugene Beauharnais, governing for Napoleon, King of Cisalpine Gaul, who stands at Milan in effigy, the naked Cæsar, sceptred and laurel-crowned.

The Bacciocca’s road is carried so high and

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steep, and over such formidable precipices, that after her downfall, being often impracticable in winter, it was gradually forsaken ; landslips allowed to interrupt its highest points, and weeds to overgrow it, becoming at last only a rough path for charcoal-carrying mules, and barely that : vanishing like that Napoleonic kingdom of Italy. The other day, driving across the pass, I noticed its opening into the main high-road from Florence to Modena ; a strange, stony, weedy track, mysteriously disappearing among the grass slopes. And when the guide spoke of it, I suddenly brought to mind the other end : that "old Modena road," unexpectedly appearing, with its rough pavement, out of the chestnut woods along the lower Serchio ; a black wooden cross adding to the mystery with which it drew my almost childish eyes. The other end of the Bacciocca's interrupted road emerging down in those distant, distant valleys ; emerging also, in my own far-off teens, with heaven knows what ups and downs, and waste, untrodden memories between them and this. . . .

What strange things roads are ! I repeated to myself for the hundredth time (for the thought

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## Of Roads

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has come on that Roman road running straight up and down the Northumbrian moors, and on the wide white road issuing out of the Forest of Fontainebleau, and marked "Route Nationale pour Marseille et Antibes"); rivers made by human hands, down which language, art, customs, civilization flow!

For note these circumstances. Where I was standing, high up on the mountain crest, when the guide pointed out the Bacciocca's road, I was really far nearer to the Lucchese valleys, the valleys where I spent so many early years, than to this so familiar Florentine Apennine crest, this neighbouring San Marcello, let alone Pistoia. The sheep grazing around us belonged, the shepherd told me, to the Lucchese village of Montefegatesi, to which I climbed those long years back. But the people up here speak the same language as at San Marcello and Pistoia: they look to Florence as *the* capital, although this river Lima, falling into the Serchio, goes straight to Lucca; while Pistoia is separated from us by a long range of highish hills, the watershed of the Reno, going into the Adriatic. But the road connects; the road which winds through San Marcello, up the Reno valley,

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down to Pistoia, past that old bishop's villa, to which it will add another charm by leading my memory to these green beechwoods now surrounding me. What an event is the making of such a road ! How full of historical meaning, past and future ! Nay, the making of the original mule-track. . . . And how full all things, even the beaten, dull white macadam, are of life and history !

For the other road, which now enables you to travel hence into Lucchese, that very logical road following the course of the river Lima, was made only about sixty years ago. Why ? Because at that time the Duchy of Lucca fell to the Grand Duke of Tuscany ; what had once been the independent and hostile Lucchese commonwealth became Florentine. It took the death of an Archduchess (of Napoleon's widow, Maria Louisa) handing over Parma to a Ludovic of Lucca, to open this district up to itself, uniting the two ends of the river valley. But it was too late : the Lucchese were left with another dialect, tinged already with Ligurian, contemptible to the Pistoiese peasants. Now, if the traitor Filippo Tedici, instead of having his head cut off and hung (as it hangs

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## Of Roads

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in effigy still) at the palace windows of Pistoia, had but succeeded in handing over the castle of Popiglio to Machiavel's hero Castruccio, the road would have been made along the Valley of the Lima ; these forests would have been Lucchese ; their peasants would have imagined the apparition who foretells the future dressed in the robes of the Prince of the Republic of Lucca ; and the pure Tuscan-speaking mountaineers would have been closed in between the Reno and the Arno.

On the other hand, the Bacciocca's road, Napoleonicallv soaring above the abysses, might almost have united the hostile provinces (for the convenience of her chariot and bandboxes) but for the snows and the landslips. So that elements and Archdukes, geography and history, seemed to have played a droll game against each other for the nationality and language (even for the *bad* language, since Florentines are notorious blasphemers, and Lucchese mealy-mouthed) of whole districts and populations. And then journalists and school primers, and persons desiring the exclusion of foreigners, talk big about blood and race ! Why, the possibility of walking dry-footed instead of



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wading, will make one race of two, unite most hostile civilizations ; the bridge, replacing the ford—nay, the ferry—between the Janiculum and Aventine, merging Rome and Etruria. These little prosaic considerations, to those who realize them, are full of tremendous poetry.

But it is not merely civilization, art, language, which flow along roads, along those dusty rivers made by human hands. Our thoughts and our sympathies travel also along them, far quicker than across the ploughed fields and the mountain sides over which, as we say, the crow flies. There is a charming passage in Madame de Noailles's diary of her little *religieuse pour rire*, about the noise of the trains bringing with it, as they hurtle past the convent, visions, almost scents and the taste of the air, of distant Southern places. And perhaps the sea seems such a gulf of separation (though in all but quite modern times it has been an element of material union), because its highways are marked only on charts, and our eye follows no tracks along the indefinite waste of waters.

But our thoughts travel along roads rather up-stream than down. The white riband before me, twisting along the dull green and brown

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## Of Roads

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valley of the Apennine stream which I hear but cannot see, twists into my past. Into what are, perhaps, the most important years of my life, my youth, all gathered up, long as they once seemed, into one small heap, of which ten minutes would make the inventory. Nor into my past only. Perhaps, if one may say so, into my innermost self, the self which never changes. For affections have altered and interests ; people have come and gone, all so essential at the moment, so negligible later. But these places, these hills and rivers and houses, possess me as before, their power unchanged. And they beckon to my thoughts, and draw them into the past along that mountain road.

## THE BEAD-THREADER'S FUNERAL AND THE CHURCH OF THE GREEKS

I CHANCED this morning upon a funeral at the *Frari*. After looking at Bellini's music-making angels, and at the triumphal arches and equestrian monuments, among which stands out so grimly the wooden box, painted with crosses and skulls—holding, for our fancy at least, the headless corpse of Carmagnola—I was stopped, in going away, by the arrival of men in red smocks carrying heavy gilt candlesticks and a coarse gilt Christ upon a pole. After them came a priest and acolyte, and a bier.

The bier was set down in the choir, opposite the altar ; a coffin, covered with a magenta pall, imitation silver crosses hooked to the sides, and a tinsel crown on the top. And round it gathered five or six young women, composed,

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## The Bead-Threader's Funeral

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correct in their best black dresses and black lace veils ; prayer-book, handkerchief, and fan in readiness. And with them, to show that the contents of the little coffin had been, as an old man told me, *nubile*—that is, unmarried though of marriageable age—came four little girls, in starched white frocks and veils, each with a bouquet of artificial flowers. They stood round the bier, while the young women knelt down, trying to spill as little as possible of the thin waxlight in their hands. Then the service began, gabbled out at tremendous speed before the tomb of Francesco Foscari.

A small congregation had meanwhile assembled—I know not whether out of compliment to the poor little marriageable dead, or merely because church is a convenient nursery on a hot morning ; for these *faithful* were mainly children. They lolled and rolled about, in groups of twos and threes, dear tiny girls with curls and topknots, little moving bundles of scarlet and pink and faded yellow among the carved oak saints of the choir stalls ; the mothers keeping one eye on them, the other on the priest bobbing up and down before the altar. When Mass had been despatched,

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the priest, his acolyte, and the men in their red smocks took up their position before the coffin.

“In saecula saeculorum, Amen,” reads the priest as fast as he can tear. “Amen,” answers, all in one syllable, the acolyte. The women lean forward, the waxlights guttering over their benches ; the little girls in white, superior, imperturbable, shift from one leg to the other, pull up a loose white stocking, adjust the paper bouquet. The children in the stalls grow weary and unruly, open and shut their mothers’ red fans, drop them noisily, titter, take each other by the hair ; the little ragged boys, meanwhile running round the upper row of stalls, bend over and catch at the heads below—such sweet, clean-featured little heads, with knots and curls of blond hair ; heads rolling from side to side, elbows meanwhile pushing, legs kicking, feet clacking.

“Et lux perpetua luceat ei, Domine,” intones the priest.

“Amen,” answers the acolyte, in one syllable.

A rattle of money-boxes, and the service is over.

In a minute the four fellows in red smocks

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## The Bead-Threader's Funeral

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had stripped off tinsel crosses and crown from the rough deal coffin, and replaced the red pall by a rusty black one; the congregation had dispersed, leaving only the priest talking to the women in black and the little girls in white. The four men raised the coffin on their shoulders and walked down the nave, between the tombs of Titian and Canova, the various triumphal arrangements of admirals and captains, the great spectacular monument where the Doge Valier or Venier is going off to heaven in state—"Hic revixit" says the inscription)—among his negro lackeys and attendant cherubs. I asked a young sacristan in red who the dead person was: A girl who made bead garlands for cemeteries; nineteen years old; she had died of consumption.

I left the church by the side door. In the square, blazing with sunshine, I came upon the funeral once more—people crowding round, and people on the wharf and staring from the bridge over the canal. The black coffin was settled in a long black boat, which made off with it, two of the men in red sitting at the stern. The priest and his acolyte, still in purple and lace, stepped under the hood of a gondola, one of

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the bier-carriers pulling off his red smock over his head and taking an oar—a stalwart and keen-featured lad with shining teeth. Finally, the young women in black, after many compliments, also got into a covered gondola, looking to their veils as they got under the *felze*. And all shot under the bridge.

Very heartless? Surely not, if we strip away the hypocrisy of people having at least five hundred a year and a sitting-room. The poor little consumptive maker of bead garlands for cemeteries is indeed now—save, perhaps, for her mother—as little important as the dead kitten bobbing up and down, a sleek, grey ball, in the green water of her native canal. But that just answers to the truth. The poor (let us have the courage to say it) leave no trace behind, and are in this respect less of a fraud than the rich, who possess ancestors with names, and for their bones, inscriptions, and what the French call *concessions à perpétuité*—to wit, their measure of earth properly paid for all eternity. There is wonderfully little *lux perpetua* for any of us; and the poor are too busy and have too little houseroom for each individual's addition to the common fund of life, the crowd of living beings,

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## The Bead-Threader's Funeral

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the group of surviving thoughts and emotions, to be labled with an individual memory.

This does not prevent little makers of glass-bead garlands, even when they die of consumption at nineteen, from having played their part—perhaps been happy and made others happy (some nice, clean young fellow like the one who pulled off his red cassock to take an oar)—and being glad that they too will have a funeral service with married friends in black, girl friends in white, wax dips, and fine Latin words promising some vague glory which is, after all, *this*. And it is all right that Latin and Southern Catholicism, well-connected and long-established enough to permit itself occasional sincerity, should be as rough and ready as the truth requires. The sanctuary, swept and garnished—into which only the priests penetrate as in the Greek Church—is good, literally and metaphorically, for keeping up a standard of solemnity, offering a half-curtained glimpse of unattainable splendours which shine through the lives of those who cannot come near. But it is good also to have hurried requiems which neighbours can attend and bring unruly children to without fear of boring them ; good that the



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carrying off of a poor little consumptive's coffin should mean a holiday in best veil and shawl, a jaunt in a gondola across the lagoon, to the other young women who continue cutting the rods of coloured enamels, threading the heaps of beads all day, and, if sufficiently gifted, making them into imperishable black and mauve wreaths for the more memorable dead.

It is part of the greatness of Catholicism—its human, democratic, universal, and (through inheritance of Paganism) virtually primæval character—that it should have brought an element of abbreviation—nay, perfunctoriness and *sans gêne* in answer to the hurry and inattention of poor humankind. This thought came home to me the other day in that Greek church of Venice, which is a church (belonging to a minority of rich merchants as well as to an aristocratic ritual) of the swept-and-garnished type, almost like an English cathedral. But its doors stand open ; and as it happened, while the perfect chants rolled on in stately endlessness and the golden *pope* came out of the golden sanctuary leisurely—nay, lengthily—reading the Gospel, with unstinted clouds of real frankincense around him—it happened that a tiny member

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## The Bead-Threader's Funeral

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of the Latin community strayed in by mistake. A small girl, clattering in her clogs with the rapid crossings and bob-genuflexions of her persuasion, ran up to the chancel benches, plopped down to a hasty prayer, clattered and bobbed and crossed herself, head erect, unabashed—the incarnation of the democratic human needs which have made these splendid esoteric rites of mingled Judaism and imperial Byzantium turn into the shabby perfunctoriness of every-day Latin Catholicism.

This Church of St. George of the Greeks is one of Venice's most wonderful places. One has the impression of a sanctuary which is at the same time a treasure-house ; gold everywhere—furniture, eikons, lamps, embroideries—not gilding, but real, heavy gold. The vestments are stiff with it. The bearded golden priest goes backwards and forwards, the gold-embroidered curtains opening and shutting for him, revealing and hiding a nimbus of tapers and incense and shining encrusted walls ; while the acolytes, in slender folded linen smocks, with gold stoles crossed over their backs, kneel before the rood-screen. There is a sense of the departed splendours of Judaism, of a Solomon's

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Temple behind those half-drawn curtains ; and every time that *pope* came forth a name rose up in my mind—Melchizedek, he who was a priest and also a king. After that service at St. George's of the Greeks, we walked home through St. Mark's, entering it by the sacristy. The hot air, smoke of incense and dust, the shuffle of human beings and snuffing of priests caught one by the throat after that fair empty splendour of the Greek church. Caught me at least, subduing, crushing, perhaps rumpling my imagination and feelings, but making them humaner. There is, in this magnificence, a share of shabbiness ; in this venerable place the sense of the deciduous, the perishable, which, in a way, is also a sense of the eternal. There is room, in St. Mark's solemnity, for such as that consumptive girl who made bead garlands for cemeteries. And St. Mark's is the greater for her poor little presence.

## THE RIVER TEMPLE OF CIVIDALE

**T**HERE is most often a special grace attaching to first acquaintance with a locality. The fancy leaps to take possession of unfamiliar charms ; or, rather, things will lay themselves out deliberately to conquer us. It is like love at first sight, compared to which all else seems what the French call a *marriage of esteem*. But there are exceptions to this rule ; and it may happen that the company of a genuine priest or priestess of the Genius Loci initiates us to unguessed wonders : the elusive divinity of the place, obstinately hidden before, responding to the words, sometimes to the mere quickened glance and sudden gesture of the adept. Thus it has been with Cividale this autumn. I knew the place before (or thought I knew it), and brought that old fellow-traveller of mine to see its temple and river. But, as things turned out, my friend

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has initiated me into their matchless romance. That little temple, serving as chapel to the adjoining nunnery, is certainly a place for such initiation. I had bidden the sacristan return to his dinner and leave us there alone, locking only the gate of the river terrace, so that the sound of the weir rose into the dusk of that strange sanctuary. It is a coloured dusk, filled with the faint scent of mouldering woodwork and of the incense of long ago. The vaultings are full of the smoky purples and yellows and greens of rubbed-out frescoes ; and the brown carving of the Gothic stalls (worm-eaten and frayed almost into natural objects) is picked out with orange and blue. But, facing you as you enter, and making your heart stand still just a fraction of a second, is the unearthly whiteness of a row of life-size figures in an arch. Byzantine ladies, side by side, isolated, straight and tall, in stiff, plaited robes, already like the queens of the portal of Chartres, and still like the tight-draped goddesses of archaic Greek temples : Anastasia, Agape, Chæonia, and the three other virgin-martyrs of Aquileia.

Into their presence we had crowded on my first visit to Cividale—an ex-Minister, some

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## The River Temple of Cividale

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American ladies, the young men of the Liberal Monarchical Club, and myself; twelve of us, without counting the town authorities, the police force, and a due contingent of severely reprimanded street boys, crowded into the presence of the Byzantine virgins and martyrs, rigid and unblemished and majestic above the tombs of two Longobard Dukes. After that (I am still recounting my first visit to Cividale in Friuli) we had a very good dinner in the picturesque inn, with its Venetian balcony, where, according to the servant's information, one of the heads serving as balustrade-knobs is that of the Beata Benvenuta, who, on one single moonlight night, embroidered a great veil for the Madonna. . . . I had, even at the moment, an odd feeling that I knew more about that Beata Benvenuta than the Goldonian Locanda waitress was ever likely to know; was the miraculous garment really a veil for the Madonna, not rather something useful for the Christ Child, and had not the Beata required some supernatural assistance in her work? "Who was the Beata Benvenuta?" I asked my neighbour at dinner; and, as I spoke, remembered that one of the Liberal Monarchical youths had just explained

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that the Bridge of Cividale, like many other bridges all the world over, was built by the Devil. "Who was the Beata Benvenuta?" I repeated. "As a matter of fact," answered the Count, eating his risotto, "she was a kind of great-great-grandaunt of mine, who died in odour of sanctity early in the eighteenth century." The rest was drowned in the clatter of plates and glasses at our two tables and the clatter also of tongues; politics and municipal matters were being discussed with Southern warmth, the Lace schools also, and Divorce legislation; the story of the fall of the Campanile at Venice repeated for the hundredth time, with appropriate recriminations; the superstition of Byzantine and Longobard worthies animadverted upon, but quite tactfully, by the American ladies. . . . Conversations which were continued after dinner, only less noisily, at the Museum, over the Missal of St. Elizabeth (Tannhäuser's St. Elizabeth), and the cases with Duke Gisulph's bones and teeth, his mouldering spear and silver spurs and gold cross, and the pathetic glass bottle, still half full of water, which had been found walled up in his tomb. Such had been my first recollections of Cividale; by no means

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## The River Temple of Cividale

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without picturesqueness and charm, with their incongruities of American ladies having a lovely time with Liberal Monarchical youths, of politics and flirtation, and Longobard Dukes and Byzantine Virgins ; let alone the Lion of St. Mark, on the palace opposite, reduced to a mere outline of wings and mane and book by the stones and the hammers of the politicians of 1796. Picturesqueness and charm such as Anatole France has taught us to perceive in our Harlequin-civilization ; and which it is so much to the good to appreciate. But, still, not quite the same thing as the memories one carries away when the Genius Loci has stirred in a place or in one's heart.

I have had to wait for that till my second visit to this tiny easternmost city of Venetia. And sitting once more, but with silent leisure this time, in the little temple above the river, one began to suspect who the divinity of the place might be, and that one was, at that moment, in his sanctuary. For I have forgotten to explain that the nuns' chapel was once a pagan temple. Enclosed in that brown and purple and tarnished gold of Gothic carving and frescoes are the temple columns of cipollino,



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the balustrade of delicate green Greek marble, pale and slender like the stalks of water-plants, and in the chapel-midst a strip of serpentine flooring and the circular slab for sacrifices ; while the nuns' lectern rests on the pillar which served, so legends say, as altar. The altar of whom ? one wonders and one guesses, as there comes through the open chapel door the noise of the weir and the mill-wheel, bringing the vision of the rocky river-bed draped in clematis and fig ; the vision of the pellucid pale-green stream, white in the shallows, closed in by the great mountains, where the moving clouds unveil patches of autumn snow. Whatever the god in pagan times, the abbess of this convent must surely have been the daughter of a line of sibyls.

It has been bitterly cold, this second visit to Cividale, although we are still in the first days of October ; and while we were in the Museum there came some claps of thunder and a deluge of icy rain. But how we have been rewarded for our discomfort by feeling that such premature winter has made us understand the character of this country ! The rain being over, we clambered down into the bed of the river,

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## The River Temple of Cividale

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under the great mediæval bridge, built, it is said, by the Devil. Despite the storm, the water was still perfectly pure, transparent white in the shallows, and in the current and pools an indescribable green, as of some gem yet to be discovered. But where it came from, where its rocky trough and grassy sides must lead back to, with their twistings, *up there*, instead of sere chestnut-clad hills and banks of highland cloud, what should appear but a range of Alps bluer for fields of thick fresh snow and moving wreaths of snow-storm !

We thought we had seen our last of the river. But when we had lunched there remained a bare half-hour before the rickety omnibus conveyed us to the train. And, as sometimes happens, this last half-hour of desperate scamper and snatched impressions gave us, like the moment of parting of lovers (" Eyes, look your last ; arms, take your last embrace !"), the consummate possession of the place ; and Cividale is, so to speak, *ours* for evermore.

What we saw in that half-hour, what we wanted to see again and more, was of course the river ; which we followed up its course through a suburb of farms and weavers' cottages (their

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soaked plaster flaming incomparable carnation and rose-coloured after the storm), and into the fields beyond the city walls. We thought we had seen that river at the bridge, and higher up, where the weir and the mill are, and the temple, half-hidden among gardens. But how far purer, deeper, rapider, of more pellucid crystal in the shallows, of more incredible gem-like green in its main current and pools, this river became as we followed it towards its rise ! The rocks were of shining moraine stone, white like marble or the bleached bones of animals ; the sand and shingle white also, like a polished floor ; the Alpine grass fitting close on those boulders' tops, and tufted with sapling alders ; while, wherever a little crystalline tributary trickled in, the valley opened to disclose the chestnut-clad knolls, the first autumn gold in their green, and the vineyards and meadows of the plain. Other rivers have more or less bed of their own, are more or less set in the adjacent country—at least, on one side. But this Natisone—for such is the name of the river of Cividale—cutting its way through the limestone, has made itself a place all to itself ; a sort of sanctuary, one cannot help feeling it,

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## The River Temple of Cividale

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of rock and sand and overhanging bushes and sloping lawns ; it has hollowed out caverns also, similar to the one in which, in Bellini's enigmatic picture of a river not quite unlike, though far less beautiful, the Centaur is holding converse with a Hermit. There might be such a Centaur, let alone a Hermit, anywhere here without surprising us. And that Centaur, as in Greek mythology, would be some momentary disguise of the swift secret stream, born beyond the confines of Italy among Sclavonian hills. Now, was he not the real divinity of the Pagan temple in the nunnery, the Genius Loci therein enshrined ?

As we waited very prosaically for the train back to Udine, the clouds began to break up and crimson fires to burst out in the West. The Eastern Alps also partly unclouded themselves ; and those fields of fresh snow, those suddenly revealed snowy peaks, grew an unearthly rose-colour, veined, as it faded, with purple vapours of that sanguine puce which shrouds the crucifixes during Lent. And, above the long, serrated chain, the sky cleared—pale, washed, blue and amber, of wintry purity. Then, as the last crimson embers crumbled in

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the West, a great loose vapoury cloud, which had brooded like a huge bird over the plain, dissolved into thin violet showers.

We had seen Cividale, and its immanent divinity.

## THE MOUNTAIN OF PORTOFINO

**F**OR people who have imagination, there is no fulfilment equalling expectancy or regret. Indeed, the poignancy of the Faust-moment is due, after all, not only to our passionate clinging, to our "Abide, thou art fair!" but also, very often, to whatsoever of deferred craving there may be in it.

For years one of the objects of my longing had been that "Mountain" (in Italian phrase) of Portofino. Winter after winter it used to greet my visit; a hazy violet dolphin outline, between sky and sea, when I opened my shutters on returning to that hospitable Genoese villa. It summed up the delight that yearly visit was to me, like the chink of the forge over the way, the bells of the mules carrying myrtle and arbutus faggots to the baker; the

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smell of the olive logs in my fire, which glimmered absurd and charming in the sunshine ; and also (for such things enter into our finest unwritten poetry) the excellent taste of my coffee and toast ; and the quiet of that hour of dawdling over a book, the hour so precious when one stays with friends, which is as yet virgin of talk. The point, the stab of it all, the essence of all that violet and azure winter loveliness, was the desire for the Mountain of Portofino ; desire recurrent from morning to morning of my stay in those parts, and with year to year of my return to them. And now I have at last been up, into, the Mountain of Portofino. Has my longing for it ceased ?

First I should say that its reality surpasses all my imaginings. Partly from glimpses from the train before it burrows into the long, cruel tunnel, partly from inland walks along that Ligurian coast, I knew what kind of thing it must be : thick feather of olives on the lower slopes, vivid green velvet of pines and glister of aromatic brushwood overhanging the sea ; and those northerly embosomings of rosy, leafless trees, which among the evergreen

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## The Mountain of Portofino

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vegetation of the South are the most lovable thing of all, meaning winter, and therefore spring, in that land of unchanging summer. All this I had known or guessed. But not how much there was of it. Seeing the dolphin-shaped peninsula ("Portus Delphini" the ancients called it) lying between the pale-blue morning sea and whitish Eastern sky, I had not understood that it was, what every real mountain must be, a range, a whole region of valleys and peaks—nay, more, an island almost, with its own bays and promontories and precipitous inlets, full of different climates, and with an island's separate history and character. Particularly in this matter of being wooded. For as you find the last tracts of Italian fir-forests only among the Apennine crests, so the woods of pine which doubtless covered all the Ligurian mountains in former times seem to have shrunk to this great promontory. Shrunk and intensified. This was another surprise, and the greatest: that after the mule-track had climbed the terraced olive-yards and left behind the pale-painted houses and the trellises, we found—and could have lost!—ourselves in real woods, the pines



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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fringing against the sky at every turn, and covering the sheer rocks even to the sea with their vivid green pile. And in the mountains one has, so to speak, the worth of a forest. On the flat there may be miles or only yards of wood, for anything the eye knows ; while here the trees crowd round from every side—above, below, crag above crag—against the sky and sea, telling us that there are more, ever more—as many as the heart desires. So much may be said for the Portofino pines, and for the deep scrub of heather, arbutus, myrtle, lentisk, and all the herbs which mingle their Southern aromatic scents with the sun-heated resin on those rocks. But, brushing through their fragrance as we walked, we came to a sharp turn of the track ; and suddenly, before us against the sky, instead of the blue summer sea, were peaks and fields of snow ; and immediately below us, enfoldings (for I cannot call such gentle things ravines) and ridges of wintry trees and grass—grass sere and matted and tufted with violets and primroses among the autumn leaves, a chill but hopeful world which claims one's heart after that Southern impassive radiance.

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## The Mountain of Portofino

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I understood, up there, that Portofino is not a mountain merely, but a country ; more so than most countries, for it faces other countries, the Alps on one side, with valleys and peaks complete when the storm-clouds shift ; and the distant coasts curving away on two others. And it looks down on to the nearer shores, letting you count their towns and villages : little places with white flower-like churches among the olives, and windows, flaming in the sunset, along the creeks and coves, to where the harbour of Genoa is revealed by the smoke of unseen steamers. This is the regal prerogative of high places, that you commune, so to speak, get eye to eye, not merely with sky and clouds, but with the rest of the world, treat on an equality with the kingdoms of the earth, instead of gossiping humbly within your own horizon, hedged by your own garden-trees, and walled in by the neighbour's summer-house. Nor is this all. The "Mountain" of Portofino is a country to itself, not merely by recognition of alien geography but by display of its own. It gives you from the top of itself the odd delight of looking across valleys and ridges, noting the whole movement thereof : how dry

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woods and olive-yards are folded and strained along the extended limbs of the hills ; how the pines flock down and jut out and crane over the sea. It gives you of all exhibitions of the earth's surface the one which, by reason of its fairy-tale upside-downness, is the most enthralling and amusing : I mean those views of lower-down things—peaks, pine-fringed capes, and villaged bays, apparently *erect* against the sea ; and the sea, with its foam and its distant sails, apparently *above* the high-lying land beneath us ; the sort of view only Besnard has dared to paint, giving the eye the value of one's geographical thought, and making the world from a mere idea into an actual spectacle displayed for one. Indeed, I cannot better express the fascination of that mountain than by saying how often I thought of Besnard's pictures of the Golden Age, of the fabulous past or the uncertain future, while we walked down again through the twilit olive-yards (with cherry-blossom floating above the shadowy grass), and watched the little harbour and the rose and silvery houses of Portofino appear and reappear below us, the castle hill blocking that little bay into deep blue ponds of ever-shifting

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## The Mountain of Portofino

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size and shape, but always encircled, embraced by the azure open sea.

My wishes had been right, during all those years, beckoning me to the promontory ; it was all as I had hoped, only much, much more marvellous and lovely, with the infinite resources and surprises which reality commands. And yet . . . And yet . . .

From the mountain-top I looked down towards the little well-known Genoese towns and villages, seeking, along that coast, the site of the house whence I had looked out towards this place I was now in and the window at which I had longed for the Mountain of Portofino. And, by an odd inversion, it seemed that what I felt, what now meant Portofino—the emotion, so to speak, of that name—was localized, not here in the reality and the present, but yonder in the past and the imagined, almost in that eastern corner-room with its fire of olive-wood.

That room of the villa ! There was amusing Genoese eighteenth-century furniture in it, blue and white ; and, outside my door, in the long passage, hung the “ Harbours of France,” after Vernet ; Claude-like prints which, they also,

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seemed to mean the *emotion of Portofino*. And then, yonder, across not only space but years, the morning book and the cup of coffee, and the expectation of that hurried scramble among the olive-yards and pistachio and peach-blossom-coloured houses and chapels of the hillside. There was never time to go far enough, I recollect, because my hosts lunched so early and I dawdled over my breakfast. And . . . is such a thing possible?—in that straining and chafing against return home in time, that repeated broken-off ramble, that snatched and treasured brief impression, was my Faust-moment—"Abide, thou art fair"—of this Genoese coast. Nay if all this beauty now around me, this real Mountain of Portofino, had, besides a visible body, also a soul, why, it almost seemed that this immortal essence of the thing was my thwarted wish of all those years ago.

Should this be matter for complaint, proof of the unfitness of the human heart for any thorough happiness? I think not. And I have written down this little secret episode of the Portofino Mountain and myself, in thankful recognition of all the ingredients, past and

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## The Mountain of Portofino

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present, real and imaginary, wishes and regrets even more than satisfactions, which are needed, like the bitter herbs as well as the honeyed, to make up the full flavour of our enduring joys.

## NARNI AND TERNI

### I

**M**Y impressions of Narni are coloured by the fact that I travelled up from the station to the town in the company of a newly discharged convict. He was my only fellow-traveller in the rickety chaise which serves as diligence, a long, lean, close-shaven old man, in clean but tattered clothes and carrying a small bag of striped linen. I was a considerable time before taking in the situation, even after he had told me, with an outlandish pronunciation made less intelligible still by his toothlessness, that he would like to smoke, because for forty weeks they had forbidden him to. He was stiff, almost lame, with a bad knee, and smelt of disinfectants ; circumstances which, added to his sad, excited face, made me imagine that the place where he had been

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## Narni and Terni

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forbidden smoking must have been the hospital. He was a Calabrian from Cosenza, he told me ; and that led me to ask how he had come to be in hospital in Amelia, so far north already of Rome. It was then that, with no reticence, but rather a little impatience at my stupidity, he explained that Amelia was a prison, and that he had just finished his time there. At Amelia, he said, they would allow no smoking, only *this*, taking out a snuff-box ; but now he was going to throw it away because, he said, "it was a dirty habit."

I don't know what I said—very likely nothing. At all events the old man continued his confidences. "Ah, signora," he exclaimed, "if I could tell you my whole story there would be tears !" And he did. The story came out in short lumps, which seemed to choke him. I gathered that there was *one* to whom he had refused the hand of his daughter, and who had accused him, in revenge, of participation in the robbing of a farm, for which he had been condemned to forty weeks at Amelia.

To my surprise there was no abuse of his enemy, and not a word about revenging himself ; the old man's excitement venting itself



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only in odd Southern invocations of the Virgin and confused scraps of a speech he had made at his trial. The man's whole appearance was strange—prematurely old, dark, and shrunk, with black, parched lips and wild eyes ; but his head, when he removed his brigand's hat, was very shapely, and there was not a trace of meanness or violence about his poor, gaunt, scared face. Indeed, he seemed very human. He looked round him at the landscape with an unusual interest. "It is forty weeks since I have been out of doors," he said. And then, with a word of pity for these arid rocks, he began to praise his own country. "Wine? oil? corn?" he cried with a kind of passion ; "you should see Calabria! There is every good thing of God's there."

"But you are going back there now," I remarked, feeling that he spoke as if exiled for ever. He said, 'Yes.' But then explained, with infinite sadness and difficulty, that his children had never answered any of his letters ; he did not know how to write himself, but his children all did. And then I understood that he imagined that his children thought of him as dead, and that, in an undefinable, inarticulate way, he felt

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## Narni and Terni

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himself to be so—a dead man returning unexpected and undesired.

He said no more about himself. But when we got to the walls of Narni, growing out of that pale rosy rock, with no vegetation besides the thin olives and little stunted fig-trees and the sombre background of ilex-clad mountains, he turned to me again. "You should see the orchards at Cosenza at this season," he said, and there was infinite sadness in his voice, as if he would never again see those orange and lemon groves by the Southern sea.

We stopped in the little square behind the apse of the cathedral, and I ventured to beg him to get a few cigars to smoke in remembrance of me on his way home. We parted; he wished me a good journey, but without thanking, for he looked surprised and as if he did not understand the meaning of my gift. I took a wrong turning, and instead of entering the town, which was in front of me, struck up among the rocks and olives up the hill. At the top was the Castle of Narni, built, I believe, by Gattamelata, that otherwise obscure soldier of fortune whose effigy by Donatello rides on a great bronze charger far away at Padua. The

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road wound round the rocky hill, above the huddled town and its towers, above the deep chasm of the Nera, dashing brimful and white between the slopes of thin olives on one side and the steep ilex woods on the other. When I got to the castle, with fine, delicately cut escutcheons of Renaissance popes, I found a sentry, who refused to let me pass, and pointed to another coat of arms I had not noticed, round which ran the inscription, "Casa di Coatti"—literally, "Home for Coerced Ones." I sat down among the olives under its towers, and looked on the one side over the wide flat valley with its great cloud-veiled Apennines, on the other into that deep wild gorge, where the river, after winding peacefully among poplars, rushes and foams almost like a glacier stream ; the little rough town, hewn out of the hillside, just below me, with a monotonous bell-note rising continually from it. When I got down into the dark little cathedral, I found a catafalque with tapers being lighted, and the members of a confraternity, with their white hoods thrown back, coming in and gathering one by one. As I waited for the hour of my train, a tremendous hurricane burst against the

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## Narni and Terni

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cathedral windows ; and when I drove through the gate a flood of rain rushed up across the valley. The words written on the castle, "Casa di Coatti," returned to my mind with the insistence of that funeral bell. I left Narni thinking of my poor old fellow-traveller ; and the noble little rocky city seemed very sad and solemn, dignified, like the old man, and thinking itself dead.

### II

Driving along between the rows of long sheds with broken windows, the black yards and tanks and refuse-heaps, the grim many-storied workmen's dwellings a-flutter with drying rags, I wondered in what, save in the movement and change, which may bring us nearer to an endurable future, such a place as tariffs and bounties has made of Terni can really be considered an improvement upon its unchanged neighbour city Narni, grave and stern among the olives and rocks of its precipice. Is the mess which seems the first step to the making of anything in our days, is the investing capitalists' indifference to filth and hideousness a desirable addition to the melancholy wretchedness of a

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wild Italian valley, scarce touched by the Middle Ages, barely civilized even by Antiquity?

Be it as it may, the great factories, and a tramline connected with them, crawl into the very heart of these mountains, almost into the awful presence of the waterfall, smoke of chemical works imitating the smoke of its spray. But there is a vigour of mountain freedom about this scenery, a marvellous quality of solemn remoteness, which keeps all intrusive impressions at bay : gigantic walls of blackened rock ; high distant peaks above the rain-clouds ; great mountains bursting everywhere into flowers and trees ; ilex and lentisk in the reddish rock ; heather and cytissus and every manner of grasses and herbs ; while the boulders among which the river whirls and foams are alive with the green of great ilexes and oaks in tender leaf, and draped with long dry lianas, rooting in the midst of the furious waters. One has a sense, quite unknown in any other parts of the Apennines, of Alpine possibilities ; one guesses that this water, white as the Lutschina at Grindelwald, must issue from almost eternal snows, nay, from some kind of glacier ; one apprehends far, far above,

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## Narni and Terni

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beyond, in the heart of this mysterious wooded country, the high valleys and table-lands, the almost Alpine heights of the highest mountains of Italy, the fastnesses of that great Sibylline chain which is the centre, the hidden heart, of the ancient peninsula.

At a turn of the gorge, where the road squeezes alongside of the impetuous river—all the water here, even the tiny streams, are full, flush, and rushing—at a turn of the valley of the Nera, a smoke, but lighter, more luminous than any real smoke, rises against the inky hillside. It is the spray of the great fall. From that high-lying land, valley, plain, lake, whatever it is, so infinitely mysterious from below, the river Velino leaps, one great wreath of waters, into a vast basin among the rocks and trees, thence to descend, after sending up that cloud of spray, a wide-fringed cataract, into the Nera, rushing impetuously in her narrow bed below.

I sat for a long time on the stones, unmindful of the watery mist, letting myself go to the intoxication of those rapidly moving masses of water : falling, rushing, weaving, whirling, and flooding the rocks, overwhelming the other

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river, like an ocean wave. The intoxication also of the sound, the deep, overwhelming complexity of hissing, hurtling, babbling, roaring waters.

It had rained heavily in the night ; but one had the illusion that it was the waterfall which made the valley burst into bud and leaf and flower, and filled the moisture with sweetness of cytusus and hawthorn and wine-red cyclamen among the rocks, and the still more delicious aromatic bitterness of herbs and resinous bushes. Together with that sense of the nearness of great mountains I had the feeling, in this gorge, and even where the Nera and its tributaries race like mill-streams through exuberant fields and orchards, that this was in a way the beginning of a different climate, the threshold of a South more potent, richer, wilder than any that I know ; the vague conception of hidden countries and primitive civilizations. How chill bare, stony, does not Umbria seem (Umbria manifest as soon as you have crossed the hills between Terni and Spoleto), with her austere fields and barren mountains ! How sparse and pensive even Tuscany ! Countries, one feels, after this Nera valley, made for the Middle

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## Narni and Terni

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Ages, for the refinement of difficult, struggling, civilizations, for delicate artists and saints. This mountain region opening at Terni, region of dumbness and barbarism in modern times, belongs to Antiquity and its fierce and exuberant civilizations. It is right and proper that the great waterfall should be the handiwork of Romans. One can fancy them with their lictors and sacrificial pontiffs and trumpets and garlanded victims, opening the sluice, rolling the last rock aside, letting one great mountain stream leap fiercely upon the other, celebrating the marriage feast of those divinities who have pursued, embraced, and gone to their end united ever since.

One thing is certain : that to me the Tiber, with its dreary, muddy banks and its clayey swirls, as it passes through Rome, will mean more in future for the recollection of those two white rivers, mingling in spray and roar among the woods and rocks, before giving it their waters.



## TIVOLI AND THE SIBYL

*IN MEMORIAM*

*GASTON PARIS*

**I** HAVE been only twice at Tivoli, but on both occasions taken in the Sibyl's toils; the Sibyl, not the inn, I mean, but the enchantress.

On the first occasion we had come over the mountains of Subiaco and Olevano, along the course of the Anio, the Sibyl's stream essentially, to where it throws itself over the rocks into the plain of Rome. And we had got to Tivoli late in the afternoon, amidst the ringing of bells, and with the dreaminess of a long journey upon us. Sunset was over and the tortuous mediæval streets getting dark, when we issued out of them into the huge yards and grottoed rooms of the Villa d'Este, and the terraces and cypress avenues vanishing towards the grey, vague plain and cloudy mountains.

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## Tivoli and the Sibyl

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But the dominant impression had been of the Sibyl, the few moments at the foot of her temple ; nor did I understand the meaning and the enchantment of those great palace gardens till two years later, when it dawned upon me that they, too, belonged to the Sibyl, were the work of her enchantments, and built by the spell of murmuring waters.

I said above that the Anio was the Sibyl's stream ; and this may seem absurd to those who think of it only as it winds slowly through the Roman lowlands, sullen and muddy under its willows, going to join the sullen, muddy Tiber. But no nymph or Lurelei has ever owned a more romantic river than is this Anio in its upper course. We met it first coming out of the narrow gorge under St. Benedict's hermitage, with Nero's ruined palace opposite, under a great hill, pale green with budding chestnut and beech : a rushing torrent, foaming and making emerald pools among the heaped-up rocks. Below Subiaco, it flows impetuously along the wide mountain valley, but smooth, filling its narrow bed between pale green willows ; and here and there slackening into shallow reaches with delicately waving weeds ;

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an unexpected and almost inexplicable sight among these high and barren mountains. And near Vicovaro, swirling suddenly round deep below a little church embosomed in ilexes and cypresses, it begins to suggest, and seems almost to rehearse, what it will do anon at its mistress the Sibyl's bidding at Tivoli.

It rushes glassy through its rocky trough, races headlong into the abyss of the great fall, only a cloud of spray revealing it among the thick vegetation above. And it breaks into the little delicate fountains, garden fountains, you would think, among the ilex groves and the grottoes under the little circular temple, in that ravine filled with the song of nightingales. There is no other temple, there can be none in the world, as romantic as this one, with its circle of austere mountains and glimpses of dim plain, its high air and leaping, roaring, singing waters, placed like an altar, a Delphic tripod, ready for the Sibyl to prophesy.

That very first evening at Tivoli I felt the Sibyl go to my head, and I knew she was going to haunt me like the sound of her own waterfalls ; the Sibyl, rather mediæval than classic, dressed in knotted veils and streamers, like the allegoric

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## Tivoli and the Sibyl

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nymphs of the Umbrian painters, and, like them, moving on tiptoe with wide-open, dreamy eyes. I identified her, of course, as soon as I heard of the Sibyl of the Sibylline mountains, north of the valley of the Anio in the fastnesses of the Umbrian Apennine. But the Alpine-climbing philologist, who accidentally told me of those mountains, could not be brought to see the connection. I turned therefore for sympathy to my other neighbour at dinner, the learned Canon of San Lorenzo. "The Church," answered that ecclesiastic, with benign evasiveness, "has never expressed herself dogmatically on the subject of Sibyls; they do not constitute an article of faith, but only of opinion."

"The grotto near the summit of the principal peak of the so-called Sibylline mountains," went on the mountaineering philologist on the other side of me, "is closed by a large boulder, doubtless of glacial origin. Antoine de La Salle, the reputed author of the romance of the 'Petit Jehan de Saintr ,' was probably improving on a local legend, and not speaking from personal observation, when he affirmed, about the middle of the fifteenth century, that there is an inscription cut in the entrance of the cave, bearing

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the name of a knight who penetrated some centuries before into the innermost recesses of the mountain. And the peasantry, being questioned by a member of the Folklore Society, stated their opinion that the boulder already mentioned had been placed at the mouth of the cave to guard the privacy of the fairy who inhabited it. Personally, I incline to regard the myth of the Sibyl as a remnant of some altogether prehistoric Italiot cultus, and I must, therefore, reject the theory of my learned colleague, Hector Tristan, who attempts to identify the Sibyl of the Sibylline mountains with Venus, and the German knight with Tannhäuser. But I shall, of course, be delighted to furnish him with every possible assistance in the ascent he proposes to make of the mountain, with the intention, I believe, of himself penetrating into the cave of the so-called Sibyl."

"Hector Tristan!" I exclaimed. "Oh, then, it's all right. Of course the Sibyl will . . . I mean the whole question will be settled."

"Remarkable instances of credulity may occasionally be observed in men possessing a high scientific reputation," said the Canon, meekly, sipping his coffee. "For the rest, as

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you are aware, the only authoritative reference to the Sibyl is in a verse of the Liturgy : 'Teste David cum Sibylla.'"

"I dislike that way of bracketing her with David," I replied ; and, as the speech sounded uncivil, I added quickly, "I am sure Monsieur Hector Tristan wouldn't admit of it." And I resumed my own thoughts.

It was quite natural that she should be expecting him. Ever since that old story with Apollo, the Sibyl had shown a preference for persons of imagination. She had been entangled with Virgil, and doubtless with other poets (letting alone King David, who, although a Jew, was, after all, a writer of verse). Indeed, that accounted for the little romance with the German knight. It was bound to be very short-lived, for we all know what Minnesingers were—utterly illiterate, for all their poetic pretensions, and unable to read their sweethearts' letters when their secretary was off on a holiday. Now, the Sibyl was a lady of the highest intellectual attainments, accustomed to the conversation of the finest scholars and most delicate wits of Antiquity ; and her extensive knowledge of the future would have long prepared her for

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the fact that, as M. Renan thought and proved in his own person, the only satisfactory successor of ancient sages and mediæval poets and *ancien régime* wits is your modern French savant. . . .

These thoughts crowded upon me as, for the second time in two years, I wandered about the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. The Sibyl must have laid out these gardens at the time that she anticipated much diversion (and was disappointed) from the acquaintance of Ariosto and Tasso. It was here that she had intended to keep her poets captive among the labyrinthine terraces and walks, moss-grown and deep-shadowed by century-old cypresses and flowering bays, lulling them with the murmur and plash of the fountains, and fascinating with the rush and shimmer of the waters. There are some tanks, a whole chain of them, of deep, opaque, turquoise-blue water, which are evidently the very heart of the place's mystery, the final repose after the water's song and dance. They are guarded all round by colossal cypress plumes, and screened by tall bay hedges in pale honey flower. You see their enamel blue from the terraces above, in rifts between the green, and with the brilliant fruit of an orange-tree

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## Tivoli and the Sibyl

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against it. And you somehow feel sure that the orange-tree and the tanks are the key to the enchantments. Looking down towards the plain, the sere vineyards stretch far away ; an exquisite vagueness of pale yellow reeds upon the brown earth, with here and there a sprinkle of vivid pink peach-blossom. But nearer, close under the steep villa walls, you distinguish the trellises of reeds, spread like a gigantic net : the net—who knows ?—in which the Sibyl once caught her captives, like birds, luring them with the endless bubble and sparkle of her waters, her cascades and fountains. But, of course, nowadays things are changed, for French savants are more wily.

The adventure of the Sibyl and the Savant is not generally known, I find, and is exceedingly strange ; and the strangest thing about it is that it has not yet taken place.



## THE HILLS OF THE SETTING SUN

**I**T became evident to my mind in those recent days (now so woefully distant !) that the Euganean Hills were a country of spells, of magic.

I had for years guessed something of the kind, every time I had watched them across the Lagoon at Venice. Watched them ; for they come and go like a vision, rarely appearing before evening ; and their clustered cones, resting on the waters, strike mystery and longing into the heart, like the pale rose of afterglow against which they stand sharp in their blueness, like the haze of sunset gold in which they have curdled and grown visible.

This mythological fact had become more and more patent of late. And the eve, almost, of leaving Venice, I was trying to explain to certain friends that these Euganeans I was going to had been at all times a little country of legend

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## The Hills of the Setting Sun

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and of wonder. We had rowed in the late afternoon to the island of the Armenian convent ; and above the crinkled bays of its kitchen garden these hills arose, as we walked up and down, very clear, blue, insulated, and mysterious. It is near the Euganean Hills, I was telling my friends, that Phaeton falls with the Sun's chariot in the delta of Eridanus, where his sisters turn to poplars on the banks. The feathers of Icarus, when the wax melts, are scattered over the Venetian seaboard. The oracles of Geryon, that mysterious King of the West, decree that a treasure and a marvellous ring should be cast into the well of Abano, where the hot springs still smoke in the little valley. The wizard Peter is born at this same Abano, as if to assert, two thousand years later, the truth of those old tales of sorcery. The wonder-poet Petrarch retires to those hills to meditate and die ; and later Shelley comes, the mysterious Adonais ravished by the storm-gods. The Euganeans are volcanoes which burst, perhaps within mankind's memory, from under the sea. To the earlier Greeks, navigating the dangerous Adriatic, the sun sets visibly among the sea-girt cones : hence Phaeton, Icarus, and Geryon,

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who, if you remember, was in some manner connected with the Hesperides. . . .

My friends walked up and down between the bay hedges and cabbage rows of the Armenian island, and paid but little attention to my antique folklore. But when I got up into the Euganeans, and during all the days I spent there, the magic nature of those hills became, for me, more and more an article of private belief and a reason of secret superstition.

To begin with, there was something especial in the pleasure of the mainland after the lagoon, of the changing seasons after that unchanging world of water and sky. The pleasure in the russet and the orange and the pale gold and the green made marvellous with sulphur veinings, and the sparkle of the wet grass sprinkled with cinnamon leaves, after those changeless splendours, knowing no summer nor autumn, of mere sky and water and marble and brick of Venice. There was a sense of the world's great age, and of its youth too, in the unaccustomed rustle of falling leaves, the twitter of gathering birds, the slow, soft movement of the white calves browsing by the ponds, the big bullocks ploughing : things

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## The Hills of the Setting Sun

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which had always been, thousands of years before Venice ever was, life of the fields and woods, of the husbandmen and the rustic gods, idyllic, eternal.

The afternoon next my arrival, we walked—my young hosts and the children—up the second highest of the Euganean chain, the Monte della Madonna ; a poor seventeen hundred feet in reality, but, on that wooded cone sheer above the sea and plain, seeming so very high. At the top we walked into a cloud ; a white fog veiling all except the few reddening vines, and the white walls of a hermitage : a pathetic little church of pilgrims, weather-worn even inside, and with a vague look of a ship, suggestive of the storms which churn around it in winter. But at a lower point in returning, the clouds broke, and we had a sudden view, not over but *into* the whole miniature chain. Into this little world of crater-shaped mountains and sharp russet and yellow valleys, villages white below ; roads twisting like the tail of Mantegna's dragon, exactly as they do, for the rest, in Mantegna's backgrounds ; castled crags like that of Pendice, the long fir-fringed crest of Rua, and far off, against the beginning

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of the plain, a town hanging on a rock, Monselice.

This walk was unreasonably enchanting : the pleasure of the little wood of very old chestnuts, of the leaves and fallen fruit in the moss underfoot, and the dear familiar mystery of the great solemn trunks, a broken-off tower in their twilight. The delight of arduous walking between the steep scrub of hornbeam and oak ; the smell of the woods, sweet, summer-dried, autumn-drenched ; the amusingness of the pink limestone (like Verona marble) crumbling underfoot, and the basalt gravel rolling. . . . It was all, as I say, unreasonably enchanting. And so was everything that happened or that came before my eyes during that week. Why ? There seems no reasonable reason, save the one already hinted at, that this had once been the Orchard of the Hesperides.

Or are there perhaps in time, as well as in space, enclosed places of the spirit, little regions of tender memories and peaceful hopes, set with wonder-trees bearing deathless blossom and fruit ? A tiny *now*, safe embosomed in happy yesterdays and to-morrows, which (like the plains looked at from the hills, or the hills from

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## The Hills of the Setting Sun

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the sea) are of the mirage blue of dreams. All of us, surely, have known such days of causeless and pervading joy ; have, by some spells impossible to learn, found ourselves admitted within those vanishing, longed-for isles, those closed valleys, where the gold-dust of sunset lies tangibly on all things, and our own thoughts all wear an aureole.

When this happens, experienced or superstitious folk feel just a little fear. The Greeks, we know, with their Nemesis lurking everywhere, have always fabled shipwreck, disaster (as Phaeton's and Icarus's), in connexion with that world of the setting sun. The dark sea engulfs beyond ; and there is the loadstone mountain, making planks start. However that may be, I tasted unreasonable happiness during those autumn days of Euganean magic. I liked to think of the chain of hills bubbling up, all flame and steam, out of the River Oceanus to mark its most Western shores : blue cones which now rise, filling the heart with longing upon the shining waters in the mellow sunset. I liked to call them, to myself, *the Hills of the Setting Sun*. And, after all, the Sun most certainly *did* set there (was even *upset* hard by on

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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one occasion through Phaeton's bad coachmanship), until the Three Hesperides, disgusted by the thefts of Herakles and the intrusiveness of Odysseus, induced the God of Day to move his tent to the Atlantic waves, near which these rather exclusive ladies, Aegle and Arethusa and Hesperia, having carefully shipped their precious orangery and their faithful dragon, laid out the second garden they are reported to have possessed.

It was for other reasons, and with nothing golden to replant save dreams, that I, too, took my leave of the Euganeans, returning to Venice in ill-omened autumn flood and storm.

And yesterday, in the sad journey south, my dear Hills of the Setting Sun, as I passed by in the train, seemed very distant and unfamiliar in their disembodied autumn blue ; certainly no place I ever walked or drove in. The yellow plain of faded vines wrapped itself in vapours, with faint precocious sunset flushings, lasting till dark. By twilight we were crossing the Po, brimful, the black bridge of boats spanning it. A little lurid red still lingered in the clouds and in the turbid water : the blood of Phaeton, maybe, or Icarus's scattered feathers.

## THE BISHOP'S VILLA

**S**ITTING on the moss at the root of a chestnut-tree, the great, dark mountains, the grey cloud-wreaths all round, there comes to me from the valley, with the rustle of the torrent, a nasal stave of song. It comes from one of the farms below ; a chaunt telling of some vague pleasure in life. Yesterday also, walking up the hill, I heard the girls singing to the rhythmical clatter of the handlooms. These sounds are familiar and carry me years back—twenty or more. I recognize, together with that familiarity, a change in myself. These sounds, like so many other details of things, used to delight me by their picturesqueness, by a certain suggestion of charm. They were so much of the world's stage property. For I somehow knew at the time, in more or less dim fashion, that all similar things were only on the surface, or,



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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rather, that my observation and interest went no deeper, and that I closed my ears and eyes to suggestions of a different sort.

Nowadays—how express it?—they have lost that quality of picturesqueness and romance, those distant chaunts and all they stand for; and I have no longer any illusions about them. I see and guess—in a manner feel—all the many accompaniments, brutal or sordid, the squalor and meanness of those houses, those people, whose voices and whose momentary happiness thus rises up to me. But here comes the gist of my discourse: this new sense in no way diminishes my serenity—rather contrariwise. Feeling as I now do life's realities, its organic, inextricable muddles, that element of charm gains the value of an exception in the present, of a hope for the future. These people, ill-fed and often brutish, can sing. These birds overhead, starved and snared in winter, prowled over by hawks in summer, can sing also. Happiness, *good*, and therefore likewise *better*, are part of the stuff life is made of, and must develop with it.

Such thoughts belong to this place as much as its site and aspect, as its quality of air,

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## The Bishop's Villa

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making my yearly visits different from the rest of life, and always like themselves ; thoughts serious, but never sad or fretful. This consecrated character of the days spent here is due, of course, in part to familiarity which just stops short, as with the friend to whom all can be told, but with the wish of telling only good. Moreover, there is a virtue in the *tuum*, the *not mine*, as in the *meum*, in restraint and gratitude—gratitude that this dear ease and fittingness should be the expression of another's will, not merely one's own effort to be suited ; still more so when one recognizes that the great gods—Time, Place, and all their satellites—have had a hand in the making. Thus the blending of past and present, the house built some three centuries and altered just enough for modern convenience, corresponds (like the other fugue-theme !) with a certain mixture of simplicity and grandeur : bare floors, whitewash, scanty old furniture, and frugal meals, in a house partaking of the palace, most noble of architecture, telling of pomp and circumstance, like the escutcheons and cardinal's hats carved on its front and corner. "Nothing is finer," a witty Frenchwoman once said to me, "than a fine

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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old house *un peu pauvrement habitée*”—a truth which Italy bears out at every turn ; but no place so much, to my mind, as this particular villa, once of the Bishops of Pistoia.

That satisfaction of two decorous cravings harmonizes with the double character of the house's surroundings. It stands high above the plain and the cupola'd and towered town, but with a greater height beyond it, the hillside, in which it has been quarried and set four square, rising into a great Apennine spur ; the chestnut woods above and cultivated ground all round, so that you walk down the great steps and terrace straight into vine and olive yard. The woods, as I have said, are close behind ; Italian woods, open, airy—stone and heather lying bare to the sun and winds. The air, perhaps from that mixture of rock and the wealth of running water, is wonderfully light ; scented at noon with vine or beanflower, and fragrant at dusk with briar and wild myrrh, the woods' deliciousness. One goes to sleep to the plash of the fountain where the cans are filled, and wakes up to see the sun rising over the hillside, the peasants raking their hay under the trellises. The days up there seem spacious and sunny ;

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## The Bishop's Villa

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time for all needful things ; no self-indulgent day-dreams, but thoughts, as I have said, grave and serene, which sum up previous thinking and are almost moods.

This morning I called upon the neighbouring village priest. A very good kind of life his, in his clean, empty house among the olives and vines of the hillside ; the old mother, the young sister doing all the housework ; the old, old father reposing from his long peasant's labours in cultivating a few flowers and vegetables at the door. And the priest (who is his own bellringer !) teaching folk the things which he believes true and useful, coming out of his big whitewashed study, away from his shelf-ful of books and climbing up these hills to give the last comforts to sick and dying folk, to bring some grace and dignity into death, where there has perhaps been little in life. . . .

Coming away, along the hillside path trellised with flowering vines, I could not but feel that this is the sort of life which, if really mankind tend to betterment, must become more, not less, common. But it is not the *Priore*, not the *Priore's* fellow-priests, of whatsoever denomination, who will bring us to it ; nay, not their

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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docile, more or less idyllic, parishioners either. Rather those rebellious, often violent-mouthed workmen of the sooty towns, of whom I have been reading in my friend Halévy's book on trade unions and strikes; ay, and the learned men, pent up at present in libraries and laboratories, and with some scorn for idylls, certainly.

But peace and good will, green fields and clean skies, and even some sort of Virgilian reverence for the Powers of Good, must, sooner or later, become the rule. And walking about these cultivated terraces, round this old house which, year by year, strikes me as more majestic in its solid simplicity, I let my thoughts wander to something that should fit it. Methinks this house should shelter not mere idle folk like us, seeking for change of air and scene after the wear and tear of emptiness, and bringing nothing in return to the place. Still less a mere clever administrator, squeezing more produce and more rent out of soil and labour. But some learned man, studying the secret life of things; teaching the peasants to till their souls as well as their fields; and teaching the vines and corn and olives to bear more, out of sheer

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## The Bishop's Villa

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love of them, peasants and plants, and of his science ; a man willing to leave for birds and beasts, for air, for beauty and reverence, and for their own dear sake, corners of heath and forest. Turn everything to bread and wine and milk, and stuffs and fuel to keep us warm ? Never ! When the learned man lives in the old Bishop's villa, and looks up from his books and his retorts to listen to the children romping in the pillared court, to the sonata—it should be Mozart's, of course—faint from that distant window, then there will be food for the body sufficient to leave space and time for the bread and wine of the spirit.

## ALL SOULS' EVE AT BARBIALLA

**T**HERE are days of which one knows at the moment that, without anything having, in the ordinary sense, happened, they will remain distinct from other ones in the secret memory. Thanks to some accident of place or season, or—who knows?—of some less gross and stale condition of the body and brain, one has been living, however hidden, a life more decently meaningful than usual; and the knowledge has enhanced those moments.

It has been so here at my friend's farm or castle, between Volterra and Pisa. As I sit in the woods this autumn morning, it rises with its houses and cypresses and big pink tower upon the bluff of olives above the valley of the reedy-voiced little Evola. Not yet cruel, but merely bracing, the north wind, in friendly contrast with the sunshine to make all things

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## All Souls' Eve at Barbialla

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wholesome, is rustling among the yellowing trees and the big faggots stacked up all round. Sunshine and north wind bring home the satisfying sense of a life where not man only but the creatures of the woods, the woods themselves, are allowed their chance and their meaning. Not the oppression of the forest kept for its own sake or for vain sport, nor the worse one of mere tillage, turning all things to food and money. These Italian woods for periodic cutting, which we are apt to sneer at, have the dignity of being no mere luxury, of owing their life to what they give to man's use, even like corn and olives. Nor should we grieve at them, when, as here at Barbialla, large trees, pendulous ilexes, for instance, are left here and there to attest their power and origin, while, where the wood has been cleared, the saplings sprout up gaily, playing in the wind. And the faggots, pale russet and lilac, made of ilex and oak, and tall strands of heather, have the scent of all the summers and springs and autumns. They will end in the glory of embers by which friends talk and muse of an evening ; in the magnificent wheels and showers of sparks of the oven which bakes folks' bread.



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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Walking yesterday under the little yellowing oaks and the stone-pines, my eye was suddenly caught by what looked like an oyster-shell lying in the loose sand. And, looking closer, I found that the whole sandy path and banks were made of shells and bits of shells and shining scales of mother-of-pearl. There were little ammon's horns, ribbed palmers' shells, conchs of microscopic tritons, and bivalves filled with hardened sand, like white pouting pigeons. So, with the point of my stick, I began to hunt among the heather and fallen leaves for unbroken specimens to put upon my bookshelf with other similar-looking shells which I had picked up just this time five years ago, after a night of autumn tide and storm, on the Scottish coast. And, as I did so, that afternoon came back to me : the mournful skies, the wet beach strewn with drift-wood and innumerable shells, which we were picking up, listless, abashed, before the mortal anxiety of the woman, awaiting calamity, who had brought us there, and who walked up and down, silent, looking out at the sea, seeing nothing. That melancholy sunset, the smell of torn-up seaweed and wet sands, has always remained in my mind as symbolical of a soul's

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## All Souls' Eve at Barbialla

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shipwreck. And with it the fact, trifling, but which seemed in some deep way significant, that these shells were, for the most part, not as usual, empty, dead ; but that there oozed or quivered out of them living fleshy things, red and sleek like hidden organs, entrails which never see the light and should never be seen. As the creatures frothed backwards and forwards from their shell they brought home to me, with a faint sense of horror, the immense meaning of life, its briefness and indomitableness, as no land creatures could have done. Of such quivering slime we also are made up ; and our microscopic realities steep in our living liquids as these creatures in the sea. This thought, I scarce know why, kept mingling with the sight of this human sorrow : fibres, raw and red, of a human soul exposed thus helplessly to one's understanding. To-day, in the castle woods, I seem to grasp the other half of this hidden meaning, while digging what looks for all the world like the same shells out of the sand-banks, the aromatic herbs and fallen pine-needles of these inland hills. They too were filled with oozing, quivering red life, thousands, more probably millions of years ago, in those silted

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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seas or upheaved slime-banks on which the autumn sun and wind are now yellowing the vines and oaks, and painting the olive fruit purple.

I thought of it all day while strolling about this wonderfully romantic little place, a farm built on to some remnant of castle, to which you climb up an avenue of pines and ilexes, and big pale poplars shedding their yellow leaves on to the brushwood; and, as you turn, come upon the old watch-tower, behind some sentinel cypresses and a lattice of faded vines, which are, in some way I cannot describe, incomparably poetical and antique.

When I came down to tea the peasants in the castle chapel were singing the psalm "Magnificat," in those tones which seem to have grown hoarse and false even as other things get chipped or stained in coming through the centuries; our perfect church-singing sounding, by comparison, as if it had been renewed, cleaned up but yesterday. I remembered it was All Souls' Eve—the Vigil of the Dead, as the Italians express it. The sun was setting behind the wooded ridges; curls of smoke hanging heavy among the yellow poplars of the river

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## All Souls' Eve at Barbialla

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below. From that paved yard one could see into the church, see the lit tapers and the illuminated faces of the women holding them. In the middle of that former castle yard, now open to the landscape, stands an ilex overhanging the well, and a wine-stained cart and barrel stood by it.

Death and Life seem equally simple and proper in such a place. And at this hour one's thoughts, as well as one's eyes, naturally seek less the dimmed things of the earth than the hill outlines, dark against the pale pure heavens with their first few stars.



**BOOK III**  
**FRANCE**



## IN PRAISE OF NIGHT TRAVELLING

**I**N my heart at least, I have had occasion before to praise night journeys, and foresee that I shall do so many times again, on account of the charming bloom of vagueness and mystery which they leave upon our comings and goings. The wear and tear to the body is more than compensated by the saving to the spirit. Saving of useless and wearying repetition of impressions, of the miles and miles of landscape printed off on the unwilling brain like words on the telegraph tape, and with the same relentless evenness of *tap-tap*. Saving also of that sense of being rushed along, a bit of mere merchandise, through real countries which have no reality for us. Now, the wisdom of life consists very largely in being awake only when waking avails, and letting sleep, or at least dreams, lap us for the remainder of time ; sleep and dreams which mean, as much as waking



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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experience, the reality without which there can be no other—that of our individual self. In this way a series of night journeys has selected things according to their veritable importance, margined my life and spaced its phrases during this last month, leaving and accentuating its meaning.

It began at end of August with the drive down from that high Apennine village—the passage from the wonderfulness of the fir and beech woods to the dear familiarity of the big chestnuts ; the ten-minutes' visit at dear Signora Elena's at the meeting-point of the two vegetations ; the dinner with that kind old lady at San Marcello, the odd feeling of *Italy again*, sitting on her balcony in the warm busy night after those weeks in the high, cold places ; the drive under the full moon to the mountain station ; and then darkness, vagueness, loss of count of time and place. A few minutes' waking in the train at Mestre, the impression of the melancholy lagoon landscape in the morning mists, the little deserted-looking, shuttered Venetian casinos ; and later, after sunrise, the sudden revelation of the Alps, the sense of freshness and floweriness of the uplands.

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## In Praise of Night Travelling

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Again, a few weeks later, the drive in pelting rain down into Udine, and, before we all dined at the inn, the walk in the arcades, the wet having turned that little town, with its pillars of St. Mark, into a kind of Venice. Then darkness again, and the vague swishing of the train through unseen landscapes.

It will be plain, however, that the excellence of night travelling is closely connected in my mind with a human and familiar element. I should hate penetrating in darkness into an unknown country and alighting out of the black train at an inhospitable inn. Indeed, I am not sure whether my praise of night journeys is not in reality praise of going and coming among friends. What gave the zest to that descent from the high valleys into the zone of the chestnut woods was surely the greeting of old acquaintances come down to my carriage from the lit-up rooms where they had been dancing, so that the chilly moonlight drive across the hills was companioned by freshly seen, familiar faces, voices possessing still the real *timbre* of the present. And the wet evening at Udine, the rainy, black journey beyond was lit up, when I closed my eyes, by

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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the lights of the dinner-table—nay, by the illumination *a giorno* of the theatre to which my companions were going.

At Padua, moreover, where I spent a few days in that long journey, there was an episode which remained in my fancy like a dream, which might fitly haunt my nocturnal travels. I was taken to supper with cousins, Heaven knows where in the country, driving through the twilight. I remember the Brenta and its canals and spectral villas ; a long white house in a great old-fashioned landscape garden ; coffee on the terrace among kind and courteous Venetian folk, unknown a half-hour before ; fireworks let off, and the moon rising over the immense lawn, the round tree-tops. An impression, confused with the autumn dewiness, and those white heady scents, *Olea fragrans* and such-like, which haunt the Italian autumn, of Portia's Villa, Belmont, which may have been somewhere here ; and her friends, surely, were very much like these nice people—old *dilettante* senators and young folk in white clothes. Then the drive home towards midnight ; the Brenta, with mills and dim barges ; little white villas half lit among trees ; the moon, a red crescent, gradually

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## In Praise of Night Travelling

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withering like an ember on the horizon, and leaving the great blue vault hung with loose stars. Padua, the jolty pavement, tortuous porticoes, a palace, a dark garden here and there ; and the occasional crossing of a canal with gardens and lit balconies.

On to this dream-like episode another fastens, through the dark void of my night journeys ; and this episode is a song. It was the other night on the boat. We had got out of the shelter of the Corsican coast, past those white bare rocks like the bird-picked horses' skulls one finds in the Maremma, and were running into rough waters, full in the eye of the wind. Suddenly, out of the steerage, full of wretched people, eating, sleeping, or being ill in the cold night, there rose, with the smell of cheese and of bilge, a rough boy's voice singing that charming air, "*Che bella cosa una giornata al sole,*" which has been the street-song of Italy this summer. It had been running in my head for days, ever since that last evening at Padua, when, on the palace balcony, and in the scent of the tuberose, my dear young friend had sung it to teach her baby. The pleasure of hearing it thus unexpectedly was so great, I

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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scarcely ventured at first to make quite sure, lest my wishes were reading that melody into some other. But there came the second verse, attacked on that high note, and leaving no doubt. It was roughly sung, and considerably out of tune ; but with its lovely wide intervals, it seemed to sum up everything that moonlight and seas and noble coasts and a good climate can inspire, the serene lyrism which Italy still means to me.

Perhaps, however, at the bottom of all the unlikely charm, the kindly mystery of that long, gradual journey from north-easternmost Italy to south-westernmost France, there has been something besides that passing from friend's house to friend's house—the brooding sense of the meeting at the end. For instead of the sharp and almost cruel impatience of youth, there comes in later years a certain diffused expectancy, sweetening the time of waiting, and making one reluctant, shy almost, of reaching the goal. The happy future serves merely to draw forth whatever of pleasantness the present contains ; and one avoids fixing one's thought on it, savouring rather each idle day and hour as it passes. Certain it is that this whole journey,

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## In Praise of Night Travelling

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and most of all the two long days spent, between my night's progress, in solitary and unfamiliar places, Bastia and Marseilles, have felt strangely companioned, unhurried, and restful, with that lingering patience which fills us when a longed-for reality comes within measurable distance.

After that followed last night, which has also been the last night of my journey. A long dark one, in the rushing express, awaking to glimpses of the Rhone under the moonlight, with the castles of Tarascon and Beaucaire at either end of the bridge ; glimpses also of the salt lakes of Cette. And a few names heard through the darkness — Nîmes, Montpellier, Narbonne, Toulouse.

And at last, the early morning here, among the aftermath of the Gascon fields, in the green-shuttered pavilion by the big fig-tree, where the turkeys are rustling ; all the details of the big peaceful room, its furniture and prints, its overwhelming, kindly familiarity, the sense of never having left it at all. Thus the solitary hours slip away, waiting for the midday meal, for Honorine's knock and " Si Miss veut venir chez Madame ; " for the moment to cross the

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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garden and pass through the long library, and, as if no long months had ever separated us, to give and take the morning greeting.

Thus by my travelling at night has a miracle been accomplished ; and the mystery of time and space been at once respected and abolished.

## MONTREUIL

I AM aware of just a little emotion in writing this name at the head of my page. For "Montreuil" stands similarly at the head of five chapters of the "Sentimental Journey." And it was, of course, at Montreuil that Yorick met and engaged La Fleur. The servants of imaginary heroes are as important (in the long run, certainly) as many of our own domestics, brushing our wits if not our clothes, and setting the chambers of our fancy full of quaint and useful things: clowns and waiting-maids of Shakespeare; judicious Sancho, tender-hearted Trim; but, above all, La Fleur! Since, I would have you note, La Fleur, shabby, elegant, courteous, faithful, ex-drummer and spatterdash-maker, eternal lady-killer, La Fleur, full of resource and cheerfulness, and whistling but more blithely for an empty stomach—La Fleur, I say, stands



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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not merely for a type of valet, but is the classic incarnation of what was good in the poor French people (still brothers of the Italians at that time) of the Middle Ages and the Ancien Régime ; for which reason the Jacobin reformers, *coiffés à la Brutus*, carefully chopped its head off, till it appeared, so to speak, no more in public.

It was at Montreuil that Yorick engaged La Fleur ; and very likely in the identical inn we lunched at—an inn with posting-yard draped in Virginia creeper, and a *porte-cochère* hung about with sacrificial-looking poultry and game. It adds so much significance to the place, now that I think of it. But I did not think of it (although the “Sentimental Journey” was in my Gladstone bag at that self-same moment) till very nearly three years after. Montreuil—the name at the head of those five chapters—I must have seen it a dozen times ; Montreuil, between Calais and Amiens ; sure enough, there it is on the old posting-map, with a tiny postilion’s horn alongside. Only, I had never put two and two together. . . .

Partly because places you are driven to, across country, by friends, very often remain in a fanciful geography of their own. Ten to

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## Montreuil

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one you were barely told the name on starting, or in such manner as to send it out by the other ear. It is not the abstract, averaged thing which we learn in geography books or (their substitutes in mature life) time-tables ; but rather the place exists, before seeing it, as one single fact, vastly magnified : Vauban fortifications to be seen, a particular saint's funny-bone displayed in a silver arm-shaped reliquary ; or, more simply still, the place where one will eat in the middle of a long day's drive. That is all I know beforehand, in most cases ; pleased to be passive in kind friends' hands, and to let the place, whatever it is, construct itself, *become*, at the turn of the road, or in walking through the tidy empty streets.

"There's Montreuil." And there it is, as we approach with jingling harnesses. A mediæval vision, as you come upon it first from the slopes of the opposite chalk-downs : a crown of rounded towers, brick and stone, and of grey and russet walls, overtopped by trees and pressed down upon the brow of a round hill. On three sides the downs lie in long, sweeping bands of ploughed field, of stubble and greenstuff, barely a set of steadings

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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or a haystack studding their delicate washes of lilac and russet and straw-colour. And beyond, visible at gaps, the faint green plain left by the sea, and the crests of the livid, heaped-up dunes which keep the sea out now. Driving along, the impression of this country had been English, making one realize the time when no channel divided the chalk from the chalk, and the Somme, if not the Seine, flowed into the Thames. A bit of the same land, this Picardy, as Kent beyond ; and yet how different ! The sky, how high and clear ! the lines how immense, befitting a great continent ! And, in the grass and weeds under the wall, how the summer has left a sense, not of drought, but of wholesome, lovely ripeness ! and there, suddenly, you come upon Montreuil ; and that name, insignificant a minute ago, spells chivalry, Froissart, Shakespeare in this country, whose map and signposts show certain other names : Cr cy, beyond Conchel-le-Temple, and, yonside of the river, Azincourt.

It is excusable to forget even La Fleur in such connexion : Sterne, and the eighteenth century in general, must pay the penalty of their serene exclusion of all other periods of the world's

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## Montreuil

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existence ; *they* did not notice the walls and towers of Montreuil ; and we, in turn, do not notice their dapper ghosts promenading in those empty streets or eyeing us behind the discreet muslin and geraniums of the Louis XIV. windows. Sterne might, indeed, have noticed the occasional vine spaliered in the street, but only as showing that, despite the shrewd chilliness of Picard sunshine, this high-road through Montreuil (with little postilions' bugles duly spotted along it) does lead from Calais to Paris, and thence direct, through more jocund climes and over horrid Alps, to Rome and its antique remains. Perhaps, as a notable work of the famous Marshal Vauban, Sterne may have followed the curves and juttings of the ramparts enclosed by those older and more *gothick* walls and towers ; ramparts pleasantly set with shady elms, and commanding from the benches on the turf and the grassy sides of the escarpments an agreeable view of well-to-do houses standing each in its orchard.

Sterne (for I wish to make amends for having so utterly forgotten his existence)—Sterne was certainly taken to see the relics in the sacristy ; and though he did not perceive that it was

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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*ogival*, and had a glimpse of fruit-trees like a Flemish picture, he would have noticed (had he been there) the pathetic small wise boy who unlocked the cupboards and allowed us to handle the Byzantine reliquaries and that great silver arm with the saint's funny-bone in it. More curious still to realize: Sterne, most consummate of literary artists, would not have understood a word (at least a word's meaning) of our conversation at table in his inn parlour: realism, symbolism, the functions of the novel; the limits of literature and art, suggestiveness, the metaphor, art for art's sake. . . . What, in the name of sense, ladies and my dear sir, could all this mean? Nay, now I have realized the probable presence of this delightful ghost, how glad I am we none of us perceived it! Why, common politeness would have kept the talk on mileage and postilions, the partridge and the omelette. For with regard to such observations of character as Montreuil or any other village afforded Sterne, not one of us superfine moderns could have furnished half a page worth. And yet some of us there—yes, there eating the partridge and omelette at Montreuil—were in their generation sentimental travellers.

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## Montreuil

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Sentiment remains, but, like wonder and belief, changes its objects. For instance . . . But, having only a few lines more to give to Montreuil, let me tell you, less witty but more understanding persons of our own day, what my last impression of it was.

We had driven downhill into delicious river land ; swampy grass under poplars, green dykes and flowering ditches ; and a flush stream, long weeds floating in its crystal, which we punted across. I thought this was what we had come to see ; surely enchanting enough. When at the path's turn suddenly that vision again—I must call it one—the circle of Montreuil on its height ; and, plunging sharp down against a hillside of sere grass, a great zigzag of russet walls against a screen of trees, closing out all other view and connecting that towered city with the pellucid river between flowery banks. These words convey no definite image, I fear. Think, therefore, of those long landscapes which bend sharp round a missal margin ; that mural crown, that spur of mighty walls, and the fairy river below. The margin of a missal ? Nay, of some book of chivalry—"Morte d'Arthur" or "Quatre Fils Aymon."

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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Sterne and his contemporaries were saved much ineffectual fumbling for words by not seeing such things as this. But as for me, I would rather have seen those walls of Montreuil from the river (even at the price of the above villainous description) than—well, than have written those five chapters of the “Sentimental Journey.” But then, you see, I was not given my choice.

## THE HEART OF FRANCE

*IN MEMORIAM*

*EMILE DUCLAUX*

**T**HE heart of a country is its mountains. From their solemn meeting with sun and with cloud, stream the great rivers, the purifying winds.

And not less, perhaps, the spiritual renovation of the worn-out race below by the unimpaired vigour of mountain men. It was fitting, methinks, that it should have been among his high native valleys that I got to know the man, of all my dear French friends, who represented to me the inner soul of his country.

I had met him a year before in Paris, at the house of the lady who became his wife : a spare, grizzled man, roughly dressed in grey, with a head, just a little bowed, resembling that Demosthenes which is the noblest and most humane of antique portraits. A silent man, at least giving the impression that he spoke only when



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he wanted to ; his conversation, that afternoon, running on this country of Auvergne and on the habits of hedgerow beasts and birds. I did not catch his name, and, far from identifying him as Pasteur's successor, I took him for a country proprietor (he had a little mountain accent), living most of the year between his dogs and a few choice books, mainly of philosophy. There seemed to hang about him air more breathable than one meets, even at the best, in a capital. He remained quite apart and distinct in my memory, nothing tentative in my thoughts about him ; and when I came, a year after, to stay in his old home in Auvergne, I knew all about him without having been told anything.

It was like that country, which I did not know (nor, indeed, anything precisely like it) but immediately recognized. There was the delight of being back in the hills ; the delight even of mountain rains—heavy, fitful, separating with their whiteness the valleys from one another ; smoking from the hilltops of rusty stone and rusty heather ; hanging to the woods and the bright green sloping pastures, and leaving everything mossy, drenched,

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## The Heart of France

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trickling, the white runnels bubbling along, the noise of the swollen river rising up with the sound of cowbells. In such fine air (the remark recurs in all mountainous places) one can dispense quite a while with sunshine. In this valley of the Cère, the old district of Carladès, one rarely sees the high summits (just a cap of rock appearing spectral through the rain); and the long straight lines of basalt hills, their sides barely shelving, do not suggest the neighbourhood of a great watershed, the central watershed of France. So one learns it mainly from one's own feelings, from this special quality of the air; from nearness of rock to the surface (mossy walls and stone fences everywhere) and the juicy green of the close grass, on to which the walnut leaves are shedding. Above all, from the life of the waters.

The Doctor, as the peasants called him, was never weary of pointing out this wealth of waters: the troughs of rough-hewn basalt grown over with cress, and the minute runnels of rippled white water coursing through the dairy meadows. He felt the charm not merely of this country's prosperity, but of these sturdy peasants being helped by the good will of the

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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ancient divinities of rock and stream. Our talk was about them both, the peasants, for whom the Doctor was devising books and almanacs, and the gods. Not the gods of archæologists (though there is something endearing in the goggle stone Mercury Arvernus at St. Germain), but those greater ones, Fire and Water, who spread these hills and cut these valleys. It was the first time that I satisfied my old longing (ignorant, but not profane) for walks with some one who should tell how a country has come to be. The Doctor, in his reserved way, rejoiced in the thought of that making : fiery hills upheaving, flaming streams descending, thickening into liquid embers, and stopping, as they touched the sea-plain, cooled into basalt. Think of those flames against the sky ; of the sunsets thick and purple with that volcano smoke ! And here, where you scrape the moss with your walking-stick, are Pluto's chariot-tracks ; here the black, granulated dust of his raising. Strangest thought of all, most incredible of the earth's secrets, there were men to see it all ! Their poor tools, embedded in the lava, revealing Thought, Purpose, a tiny, humble thing as yet, but a new cosmic force,

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## The Heart of France

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to work greater changes than fire or water ! The Doctor had, to the highest degree (and the more that he restrained it), that passion for the human element which makes Frenchmen poor metaphysicians no doubt, but such adorable prose poets ; man's power of suffering becoming, whatever they do, the central fact of their universe, and all things wakening wrath or pity. With the Doctor it was pity, wide enough to transcend all possibility of hatred. His sense of justice and habit of putting a shoulder to the wheel had made him active in the country's recent dissensions ; but no Frenchman was ever freer from the vice of political intolerance, which makes Jacobins and retrogrades equivalent nuisances, with their readiness to set all things right and purify the earth of heresies and heretics. The Doctor admitted purification only of one's own soul and one's own body ; and he, chief authority on public health, had no belief in making folk healthy, let alone enlightened, by Act of Parliament. Intimacy with Nature's processes had taught him infinite patience, even with the impatience and perfunctoriness of theorists, so much inevitable waste and friction ! And he

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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was of the generous sort which gives the greatest efforts for the smallest result, so long as it be real. There was in this discoverer and teacher and fighter something I can only describe as essentially private, saying his word only when needed. Yet no one was a more generous talker when he found, not an audience (I am sure he would have hated that), but another human creature caring for the same things as himself. It was this private character, I suppose, which had made me take him for a farmer, a sportsman, anything save a writer or politician. And watching him going to and fro his laboratory, seeing his eye constantly busy with every detail of soil, or stream, or wood, I understood that I had not been so wrong after all.

The growing sense of what kind of man the Doctor was, worked into the charm of his native country. The soul—"where a soul can be discerned"—has, so to speak, cubic existence like the body, requiring more than one dimension for its comfort. And contemplative happiness cannot be complete without the sense that, over and above beauty and sweetness of landscape, there is order and dignity also in human surroundings. I have spent days in places far

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## The Heart of France

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more beautiful and picturesque than this obscure valley of Central France ; but rarely, if ever, days as happy in the sense of harmony between outer and inner things. This feeling accumulates, works deeper and deeper into one, and begets a serenity, something almost like animal spirits, very akin to the corroborating union of fine light air to the lungs with delicate sunny colours to the eye ; one's soul's needs are fulfilled, and the world seems very right.

It was borne in upon me in one of my walks above my friend's funny old half farm, half château. The Doctor was not with me ; he had put me upon my way, and accompanied his wife home. But the sense of those two people was there, and only the more because no talk, no thought of other things, interfered. And, as I climbed solitarily along, it grew ; *it*, the indefinable sense of the stuff of which souls are made, and the shape into which they have been moulded ; until it filled me like music, enveloped me like the landscape. The road was cut in the hillside, basaltic, black with recent rain, beneath banks of thickest, brightest moss and wet boughs of beeches ; below, in the tree gaps, the shining village roofs. There was

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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tinkle of cow-bells, twitter of birds ; the boom of a distant threshing-machine ; the sound of waters, the voice of the wet washed mountains. At the top of the hill I came to a great expanse of brilliant Alpine pasture, not a house or tree, or only wind-warped, making one understand that nothing save cloud and sky lay beyond. I crossed a runnel of perfectly clear water, and got in sight of a few cottages and barns, grey and weather-beaten, with heart-shaped slates. Long sheds, a pepper-pot turret, a mossy stone with a black cross ; something making the bell on the roof look like that of a chapel ; an air of consecration, though not, perhaps, by priests. And the ineffable freshness, coolness, breadth of a pass ; the grandeur and mystery of the green slope lying close against the sky, high, vast, filled with feathery and melting clouds. I thought of those people in the house in the valley ; and felt the kinship between this man and his country.

The Doctor died last May. They brought him back and buried him among his fathers at Aurillac, in sight of those mountains.

This is what I can tell of the Heart of France.

## TWO FRENCH ABBEYS

**I** SUPPOSE they have suppressed that “Abbaye Royale de Fontanelle” ; but it is sure to crop up again, as it did after the Revolution, and perhaps at other times, as certain other cryptic communities crop up for ever—I mean the congregations of fat toadstools which hoe or spade suppresses but for a few days. These are irreverent words ; but Fontanelle inspired me with no kind of reverence or tenderness—only with an odd feeling of discomfort, as towards some creature who is the born adversary of one’s very brain and marrow.

We went to it up a lovely green Norman valley, secluded from the motor-haunted highway. You feel something clerical and queer already in the village—timbered houses, nearly all inns, round a little romanesque church with a great Calvary : a place of pilgrimage. At



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the head of the village is a great stuccoed Louis XV. gate, and behind it great Louis XV. buildings, with stucco escutcheons and allegories. Then an electric bell, and we entered a modern country-house garden, empty in the twilight, with, in the distance, a monk walking under some ruined arches. Presently in the porter's lodge appeared a sort of brown lay brother, with very visible trousers under his robe and a blue *frotteur's* apron. While my companion asked permission to see the abbey, my eyes were attracted, for ecclesiastical things always attract them, by two cupboards full of images, rosaries, and other devout properties. Among these I was fascinated by the picture of a railway train in a landscape, with the motto: "Eternité Bienheureuse—Fête du Paradis—Indicateur de la Ligne du Ciel." In this same lodge, surrounded by plaster *Bonnes Vierges* and horrid little real beggar children from the village, a sewing-machine was buzzing over a pair of trousers in process of restoration.

The reverend fathers were at Compline ; but we were allowed to return the next morning, being shown over by a suave monk in black, very dirty and ragged, but very much a man of the world.

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## Two French Abbeys

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He told us the Abbey had not been destroyed by the Revolution, but sold to a manufacturer, who pulled down as much of the stonework as he wanted to build a mill in the neighbourhood. Then it had been bought by a marquis of Jacobite origin, from whom the reverend fathers had bought it ; the family's arms still everywhere, and the panelling of their drawing-room remaining in the chapel. The reverend father who did the honours was eloquent about the modern monasteries established in England and Scotland, and elsewhere, by his Order ; some had been founded with pious legacies, others by pious persons who took the habit of the Order, or, in some cases, cleared out and lived in their own gate-lodge. I can scarcely say why these stories, unctuously dwelt on for our edification, suggested nothing so much as vague, painful scenes of disappointed heirs, disputed wills, and so forth ; the steady encroachments of silent, subtle men feeling themselves in a hostile world, and ready to make up for the spoliation they have suffered by spoiling the spoilers, and undermining this modern life which disregards their centuries of tenure and service. Certain it is that the whole time at Fontanelle

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I had the sense of being in a book, in an atmosphere I had never breathed, but only read of. And it is a curious instance of the power of literature, the power—like that of music—to force us and all things into step, to move and feel and think in its modes, that whatever picturesqueness and romance I felt about Fontanelle was traceable to Huysmans's "En Route," a novel dealing with just such an unpicturesque and unromantic modern abbey as this.

After seeing all that the reverend father would show, we had an opportunity of seeing how suppressed monasteries avenge themselves ; for higher up in the valley there stands in exquisite hayfields, and on a clear, rapid trout stream, a great gaunt, deserted, and ruinous cotton-mill. And it is built, gates and sluices and all, of cut and finely moulded Gothic stones—the stones of the former abbey !

The other abbey—Valloires, in Picardy—had been turned into an agricultural school, kept by brothers of St. Vincent of Paul ; but no one wore the dress, and only one priest was visible. Something difficult to define, besides the shaven faces, told one that these were not laymen ; and

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## Two French Abbeys

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there was, in this well-kept, prosperous place, the same funny secret, stealthy emptiness, as of invisible hands, which is, I think, the mark of much modern French clericalism : these are people whom persecution has made only more powerful, giving them, one might imagine, the taste almost for hiding, for shamming death like certain animals, or taking the colours of their surroundings, becoming indistinguishable from earth or wall.

But the place itself belongs to very different times and to very different monks. It is one of the most magnificent eighteenth-century buildings I have ever seen, conventual white-wash and dark woodwork only bringing out the full exquisiteness of Louis XV. courtly architecture and decoration. The only mediæval vestige is in the church, the tomb of a beautiful young Count William of Ponthieu, a perfect Froissart figure, knightly, romantic. On to him look down, but with no absurd incongruity, two very lovely stucco or wooden angels, floating from a white glory over the high altar ; tunicked, long-locked shepherds, with the sweetness of eighteenth-century music—of some pastoral interlude, half hymn, half dance,

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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of Bach or Handel—strange and charming in their delicate stucco-white and dust-grey against the whitewashed vaultings of this dainty, aristocratic sanctuary. The former Cistercian monastery is Louis XV. also, of fine pale stone with brick courses and atticked slate roof, and white and silvery also in its main effect. And, as if to make their very human magnificence only more delicately human, the convent buildings and the great barns and steadings are all patterned with the pale green and gold of espaliered pear-trees.

All convents (save modern ones !) are full of charmigg glimpses, the little which is discreetly shown suggesting so much more ; but at Valloires it is the discretion not of austerity so much as of leisurely refinement. I remember, for instance, a wide staircase, with twisted iron balustrade, leading to an open Louis XV. window, a bit of green hillside. Then, again, alongside of the church, and with its white chalkstone Grecian façade and silvery slate roof and belfry closing it in, there is the monks' little graveyard. A big Calvary rises in a square of grass and great clipped yews, and over the white walls, espaliered with fruit-trees,

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## Two French Abbeys

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the hill looks down with its pale grass and chalk seams and brown beech coppices.

One imagines Valloires to have been built by some great eighteenth-century prelate, tired of courts and of love adventures, still young and handsome, but caring only for philosophy and agriculture, believing only in human perfectibility and some vague, democratic Utopia ; but keeping up the rites of the past as necessary to weaker brethren, and also from attachment to their stately beauty. Botanists and economists—physiocrats of the school of Turgot and Quesnel—would be called to Valloires ; philosophers and pamphleteers evade the Bastille by flying to its welcoming shelter ; great musicians, passing from Italy and Germany to England, would deflect from their way to sing or play the organ in the beautiful white church ; and the galloping postman, with horn and jack-boots, would bring in the big escutcheoned bag letters from encyclopædists, from reforming ministers, from beautiful women—vain and wanton and high-minded and humanitarian—discussing ideal liberty and gallant adventures. Thus would the Abbey of Valloires live its Thelema life of noble ease and gentle austerity, in white cells and

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corridors, with pannelling just budding at the rim into roses and vine-leaves ; among the apple orchards and the great byres overtopped by the feudal pigeon-cote. And every now and then a white-robed, high-born Benedictine would be carried down to the churchyard, where the seven clipped yews stand out against the white walls, with their green lattice-work of pear-trees. . . . But the Abbot of Valloires would be buried not there, nor in the white chapel, but thrown into that quicklime pit near the Barrière du Trône, after ascending the scaffold serene and simple, white-haired, but still straight and beautiful, an elder brother of Renan's Abbess of Jouarre.

## A DESERTED PAVILION IN TOURAINÉ

**A**FTER four years (and a good deal of water, as the French saying has it, has had time to run through the water-gate of the big mill on the Cher) I find myself back in Touraine ; and once more I am subdued by the charm of this country—the charm, quite apart from that of its beautiful, delicate lines, of an approach to the south : the sense of ripeness, the silvery tone of vegetation which has had sufficient sun without being sated by it.

The evening of my arrival, feeling tired and ill from the long damp of an English summer, I crept out across the high-road and up the low slope which I see from that topmost *Commanderie* window. I had a silly longing to see the ripening grapes, although they hang only from low sticks, almost sweeping the dry, slaty soil. The vineyard was surrounded by a little wood and a belt



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of high flowering roadside plants—mullein and borage and thyme—and a field of big pumpkins, silvery and orange, interrupted the vineyard, with an apple-tree or two. Returning home, I was struck by the way in which things fall into harmonies in this silvery country: the dusty clematis and brambles, the white road, some grey goats, and an old woman herding them and dressed in various shades of blue. It is a pleasure, from my bedroom window, to see the peasants working in the vineyard.

I have fallen more and more under the spell of this autumn of Touraine, of these high skies with soft, feathery clouds. This is France, Europe; not like Picardy, whence I have come, a mere piece of English chalk and pasture, Frenchified by winds from Alps and distant Southern hills. And there is a poignant pleasure also in finding among this Northern vegetation the humble-scented things of Italy, the wild thyme and balm, the fennel and peppermint; or, rather, finding these friendly herbs growing, Italian fashion, on each wall and on each stone-heap.

One of my first thoughts on return has been certain old farms above Savonnières, and the fear that they might have been pulled down

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## A Deserted Pavilion in Touraine

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since my last visit. But they were there still ; delightful houses in the uphill part of this little village on the Cher ; some with a castellated mediæval grace of mullions and turrets ; others of Louis XIV. dignity made homely by humble proportions and surroundings of orchard and beehives, and the delightful litter of dairy and farm. The sunset, as it has been ever since my arrival here—indeed, as it oftenest seems to be in this Loire country—was silvery, cool, as if to chasten the opulence, the sensual cheerfulness of this dear country. For everything here seems, in the most poetic way, for man's pleasure and profit and ease—vineyards, and cornfields (of pale stubble now), and orchards, and flowery gardens, and dairy meadows vividly green by the full river, and fields of vegetables and piles of orange-and-silver gourds, and walnut-trees shedding their aromatic leaves, and hedges crowned with big sweet blackberries. The very hills are sloped and flinty as if for growing wine, and in their escarpments hollowed out for cellars ; natural caves, "caves dans le roc," with wattled entrances and wooden doors : made by Nature, not for anchorites, like the tufo grottoes of the volcanic plateaus of Italy, but destined to house

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barrels and vats—nay, who knows ? some mediæval god Bacchus, hymned to by *Goliard* scholars and *fratres gaudentes*.

Among all these things comes, with a certain congruity of *Memento mori*, the impression of a splendid old house utterly dismantled and gone to ruin. The great château faces the wide, glassy river, an ample Louis XIII. palace, classic, yet with a certain Gothic romanticalness of high slate roofs and attics and finely carved heraldry. It is built round an original donjon, said to have been inhabited, like all similar places in Touraine, by Cœur-de-Lion. Alongside are the vast empty stables, monumental as in some old print, with great grass-grown yards ; and beyond spreads the park : unkempt fields of coarse yellow grass, ponds and canals choked with lilies, terraces overgrown by creepers. The luxuriant life of an almost Southern summer, magnificent, fruitful, burning, has taken back the gardens and turned them mad, all gold and green. I walked along a terraced walk of arching church-like limes, and found at its end, among empty greenhouses and deserted nurseries, a little pavilion hedged by tall weeds and nettles and so stifled by creepers that only

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## A Deserted Pavilion in Touraine

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one of the high, narrow windows remained uncovered. The door stood open, showing the charming octagon room littered with fallen plaster and sacks and garden-tools. Such a gallant pavilion ! Louis XV., with cocked-hat roof, round attics, and over the entrance, the carving fresh and sharp, an escutcheon of rustic emblems—rake, basket, and watering-pot. Such are the pavilions in Fragonard's pictures, and of those "galant" prints where pert, full-bosomed Chloes are knelt to or pursued by ribboned Strephons with the curly pates and Roman noses of sheep ; places the idea of whose insipid and foppish little vices (described with luscious vapidness by moderns like Henri de Régnier) makes one's gorge rise to think on. But in such forsakenness and ruin as this how touching ! And peopled, as the yellow leaves float down from the overarching elms and the warm wind stirs in the dusty clematis, and the long, hot day dies slowly among the tall burnt grasses, by what oddly appealing little ghosts !

Of all save these vague phantoms haunting this garden pavilion Touraine seems oddly empty. This is a recurrent impression. These

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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gentle slopes, these delicate curves of the well-built sandy roads, these spreading vineyards and sparse woods, the very colour, like mellow wine, of the pale friable rock tufted with scented herbs, the finely set white ashlar and silvery steep roofs of the old houses, make Touraine the country all of ease and grace, of kindly nature and friendly time, more purely human than any other I know. But, oddly enough, the fitting mankind seems absent. There is none of the sense of past habitation which, gently or tragically or quaintly, I get from parts of England, from Germany, from Italy even in its most deserted parts. I have never felt as if Touraine, this land of historic castles and palaces, held any ghosts for me. At most, those patched and powdered rustics of the Fragonard pavilion in the deserted park.

## THE PETIT PICPUS

**O**UR last ramble through Paris together was oddly serious, almost tragic. It was a stormy spring day, the young leaves yellow against an inky sky ; the high roofs shining like very old silver in the hot, fitful sun. As always happened in our expeditions, we had no notion where we were going ; the Louvre, as usual, had already closed, and without more ado we got into the nearest tram, quite vague about its destination. It set us down at last, after interminable stoppages in the Faubourg St. Antoine, at the Place du Trône. I had never been there, and the name was to me synonymous with the Reign of Terror. This reminded my companion that in that neighbourhood was the burial-place of the poor guillotined folk ; a friend of hers, many of whose family rested there, had told her of it, and she was taken

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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with a pious whim to see it. We were setting out on this rather vague quest, when the skies shrouded everything in crape, and we took refuge from the coming storm in a little café of that humble and rather questionable quarter. Being Ascension Day, whole families were abroad ; and two of these crowded in the same place, with stray workmen filling up the other tables. We had some briny beer, and a girl came round with queencakes, like small bath sponges, in a white basket. Down battered the rain, with claps and rumblings of thunder ; people talked little or in undertones ; and even the children running in and out among the tables seemed unnaturally quiet. We fell to talking, of course, of the Revolution ; of Grandfather F—— having been in it as a child, and never speaking of the country save as “Bloody France.” Those little Gascon nobles, even in their remote South, had had a tricoloured Commissary and a perambulating guillotine among them. What should we have felt if we had been there—how behaved ? I knew for a certainty the fine, smiling, serious politeness with which my companion would have taken it all ; as to myself . . . one hopes that such

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## The Petit Picpus

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circumstances bring forth their crop of appropriate good manners ! And, looking round us at the little tables and beer-glasses, we realized also that some of these nice, well-behaved workmen would doubtless, if the opportunity came, send us to the scaffold from motives of virtue ; or should we be guillotined by some of our own dear, refined, and philanthropic friends, those most astonished if they could see us (while they were having tea at the Bois) in that café of Socialist purlieus ?

The rain abated, and after vague wanderings we met a cab lost somehow in that neighbourhood. "To the Convent of the Petit Picpus," said my friend. "Picpus ! Petit Picpus !" I exclaimed. Why did the name come as out of my childhood ? Was this—was it not?—the convent where Jean Valjean was gardener, and where dear little Cosette said gravely to the confessor, "Mon Père, je m'accuse d'adultère ?" The marvellous ragged heroes of barricades and drains crowded into my head.

Meanwhile we had got out at the end of a street which was one long blank wall ; and the hard heart of a convent porter was melting because my friend recognized his accent as of



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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Gascony, and revealed herself as a country-woman and half a neighbour. The talk of that distant country of the Tarn and Garonne and Lot put a little dab of landscape, of gentle southern river and hillside, into the stony emptiness of this Paris convent.

First we were taken across a tidy, arid yard, into the chapel ; as Philistine, bare, stale, and unprofitable as *bourgeois* French Catholicism could make it. It was empty. Only before the altar knelt two white figures draped in long crimson scarfs. A moment later in came two others to relieve these, for this is a convent of the Perpetual Adoration. The nuns were oddly dressed in white flounced gowns and little goffered caps, the great crimson scarfs trailing like inappropriate warlike banners about their grandmotherly costume. The two new-comers curtsied and bowed to each other ; the first couple went, the second stayed ; as they saluted one another, we realized that they seemed come out of a family portrait by Ingres, and the flaming scarf, symbolical of the blood shed for men and by men, became the shawl with which Corinne or Tolstoy's Natacha danced.

In this fashion, relaying each other day and

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## The Petit Picpus

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night, do the nuns of the Petit Picpus expiate by constant prayer the blood-guilt of the Revolution.

Of its victims, thirteen hundred guillotined at the Barrière du Trône from Prairial to Thermidor—not three months!—lie at the end of the Nuns' Garden, under the rank grass guarded by stunted *arbor vitæ*. Lie, all the thirteen hundred, pell-mell, it would seem.

But the little common burial-place is preceded by a gloomy yard of great stone and iron mausoleums, escutcheoned and coroneted. The descendants and relations of some of those victims have come to rest in dreary pomp near where they lie mixed irrecoverably with *La Roture* in the common ditch. Not a plant, not a blade of grass in this black aristocratic place. So that the little dank field behind the grating and the shabby cypresses look living and cheerful by comparison.

And in the wall of this lamentable place, sooty and rust-stained by the neighbouring factory chimneys, is fastened a tablet of white marble, with the name of André de Chénier, and a poor little crown of green tinware. Even in that grimy place the slab has kept the sparkle,

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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the unmistakable salty purity of marble from Greece ; something which symbolizes, far better than any leaf or flower, the genius of that poor lad, born of a Greek mother in Constantinople, to perish some raw April dawn here at the Barrière du Trône.

You get to these cemeteries, and back again to the convent, by crossing the long garden, beautifully cultivated, where, between the beds of vegetables and the well-trimmed fruit-trees, the nuns are taking the air ; quaint figures, like Restoration great-aunts, with pink faces encircled by goffered caps, and holding up their flounced white skirts over well-starched petticoats. All round are the gardens, seemingly, of other convents ; and, at distances, gaunt stacks of workmen's dwellings, and factory chimneys, with heavy curls of black smoke. I picked, for remembrance, the only flower about the place, a little white candytuft. Its primness suited those neat, prosaic nuns ; and, like them, it was sprung from the blood of wholesale fratricide.

It was still dripping as we left the Petit Picpus behind us ; the air chill and grimy all through those remote, dreary quarters. But

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## The Petit Picpus

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as we crossed the Isle St. Louis it suddenly cleared. The narrow wet streets looked like the golden ways of the Heavenly Jerusalem ; and above the rustling, tender poplars of the wharves the pinnacles and gargoyles of Notre Dame were profiled against a sky of moist Western gold.

It was our last ramble together through Paris, very poignant and solemn.

## THE CHAPEL OF THE SICK CHILDREN AT BERCK

SOME day—who knows?—this is going to be a place of pilgrimage for souls seeking comfort and rest in the art and the ideals of the Past. Just as we, who happen to be living at present, make expeditions up Umbrian hills for the sake of a few patches of lilac and yellow and rose colour which we construe into figures of *Pax* and *Mansuetudo* on some palace wall, or across malarious fields to a lonely basilica where the carved peacocks and vine-wreaths and severe blessing Saviours are picked out with the vivid green of damp; so also *they*, the people who will happen to be alive *then*, may make expeditions to these sand-heaps of Berck.

The thought became familiar to me during the week I passed in that prosaic little place. It is a long row of jerry-built villas and Swiss

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## The Chapel at Berck

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cottages half-buried in sand-drifts by the perpetual gales ; untidy streets of cheap shops and tramways, appearing and disappearing among the dunes and the sedgy land reclaimed from the marsh. To the back is the old Picard fishing village, with a weather-beaten church, of poor seafaring folk ; but that is a mile inland, and thirty years ago there was nothing but a coastguard station nearer the sea.

The great stretch of sands, ample and flat, with the little flotilla of herring-boats stranded upon it, is all mapped out into tennis-courts and croquet-grounds, where the young folk are playing. They are the brothers and sisters ; it is not for them that the crowd has come to Berck. And all along the sands goes the procession of sad little donkey-carriages, vehicles unnaturally long, shapeless, each with a poor little scrofulous creature stretched full length inside.

Those are the children of well-to-do folk who hire the jerry-built cottages and the little hutches on the sands, and buy the bathing-clothes, and toys, and postcards, and lollipops in the cheap shops by the tramway. Then there are the others. An immense veranda'd

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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hospital is set—one scarcely understands how—in the white sand and the bent grass; the gales burying its steps and choking its doors with perpetual drift. And in it are nothing but little sick children. In the verandas those who are recovering, crawling on mattresses, hobbling, playing about in all manner of grotesque and pathetic rigidity of bandage and apparatus. And in the rows and rows of cots, what poor, poor little things! many with tiny hands too deformed, you would say, to clutch the toys and picture-books on their coverlets.

The nuns, Franciscans of the Third Order,\* very kindly showed me all over the hospital: the great kitchen, with brass cooking-range and array of saucepans, where they were plunging an immense iron basket of eggs into the cauldron; the refectory—long tables glazed a lovely bluish-green, on which the plates, cups, napkins, fruit, looked ready for a Robbia frieze; and also the operating-room, where I was admitted to see the surgical dressing. A white-glazed room, with glazed white tables and rolls of delicate white bandages: pure, flower-like, like a little sanctuary. Small children,

\* Written in 1901.

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## The Chapel at Berck

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in wonderfully rapid succession, were brought in on stretchers, deposited on the tables ; old plaster cases broken up, cut away ; sad, little raw-red limbs washed, gently pulled, straightened ; holes made, pumps pricked in, evil humours sucked out, disinfectants put in ; new bandages and plasters applied ; a fresh, tiny partial mummy despatched. . . . All quickly, certainly, with infinite, humorous kindness to the poor little ones screaming with weariness and fear. The crop-headed doctors in their white smocks, the Sisters in their white robes, moving with the quick, gentle precision and solemnity of some religious rite. The wards of the hospital open on to the verandahs ; and wherever you stand, by one of the white cots, you see the sea, the wonderful periwinkle blue, heaving slowly between the sparkling white sands and the shining grey grass always shaking in the wind.

The poverty, brutality, overwork, and shame of the great cities, which send out cargoes of such poor little half-living refuse ; on the other side the tender skill of hand, the disciplined intuition, the impersonal motherly love, which say *No* to all such horrors ; and the cleansing



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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sea-tides and winds, the quickening sunshine among the sands, which add their steady elemental *No* to the faltering human one :—these are the forces of perdition and redemption which one feels arrayed against each other at Berck. Forces which, under the daily repetition of similar sights and emotions, fuse quite naturally into visible symbols : the distorted outline of a sick baby, the smile of a nun, the surgeon's instruments and rolls of bandages, and the dazzling magnificence of the sands and sea ; and unite in one's memory into vague allegories of good and evil, not indeed as our fathers conceived it, but as it is borne in more and more upon our modern soul.

Now, it happened that one of the four or five great painters of our day, the painter of the Paris Hôtel de Ville ballroom, of the chemical lecture-room of the Sorbonne, and, above all, of the vestibule of the École de Pharmacie, M. Albert Besnard, came to Berck two or three years ago ; and understood the meaning of the place in the stress and the joy of his own child's sickness and recovery.

All evil is disease, begotten of ignorance and indifference ; and the double holiness of heart

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## The Chapel at Berck

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and mind shall rise up and cast it forth from the world of mortal men.

This is what the painter understood as the lesson of Berck, and what he has tried to express in the series of paintings intended as a token of gratitude to the place which had revealed this belief while curing his little son.

The place which M. Besnard has chosen to decorate in this manner is the chapel attached to the Children's Hospital, and belonging, like it, to those Franciscan Sisters. And the consequence has been that he has had to embody his scientific and humanitarian beliefs no longer in the modern and secular symbolism he had invented on other occasions, but in the symbolism of Christianity. The series of canvases on either side of the roughly carpentered little chapel are the story of the sufferings, the labours, the triumph of Christ. Not of the Man Jesus, but of the incarnation of pity and justice on earth. To Christ resigned and seemingly helpless on His big rough cross, the poor modern workman, by his wife's sick-bed, lifts up the newly born child already consecrated to suffering. In that same poor little room, where the man breaks down by the side

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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of his dead wife, Christ leans with His cross towards the women who are taking charge of the motherless child. It is to Christ that the child is brought in its terrible sheath of bandages and plaster. For it is Christ who has suffered the misery of mankind in order to redeem it, who has felt in order to help. On the opposite wall, the cross is gone ; and Christ stands, no longer in resignation of suffering, by the operating-table on which a sick child is stretched, infusing love and strength into the surgeon and the nurse who bend over it. And in the next composition Christ touches with compassion the heart of the well-to-do young workman and his wife taking their ease on their doorstep in the evening, indifferent to their less fortunate fellow-creatures around them. These are the sufferings and labours of Christ. But there are two more compositions, richer in figures, deeper in meaning, and which face one another as the first and the last of the series : Christ's crucifixion, and Christ's final triumph—the beginning of evil and its end.

The first of these paintings represents the polluted suburb of a great town : against the outline of its factories, veiled in smoke, and

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## The Chapel at Berck

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the flare of its furnaces, the great cross stands athwart, with the Saviour freshly nailed upon it. At its foot are the terrible company of those He has come to redeem, the gaol-birds fighting, the starving woman about to give birth to another starving child, the growing girl distorted under an over-heavy burden, the drunkard, the lunatic ; and Christ, in their midst, writhes, nailed to His cross, and sends forth the great cry of despair. *Venio iterum crucifigi* is the Saviour's legendary answer to Peter ; and this is the representation of that eternally renewed crucifixion.

On the opposite wall is a composition of corresponding intricacy and significance. Nearest the spectator a great roan horse is being driven by a ploughman across the fruitful upturned earth, while a stately young mother looks on, her child at her breast. Through the solemn green country workmen are returning in the evening light, and among them a pair of lovers, reading out of the same book as they go. A broad river, embosomed in trees, winds into that peaceful country, against whose sunset sky a town is being built, scaffoldings and ladders against the opal and the pale rose. On the

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smooth green stream a boat is descending, propelled like the one seen by Dante, by the outspread wings of a great angel; and there are angels, it seems, hovering above the unfinished town in the distance. Whither is the boat and its heavenly pilot carrying those souls in the decline of the serene day of work and of leisure? To the City of the Just, which they have helped to build in their dreams, or to eternal rest in the ocean which receives that river of life? Each one of us will give his own answer. But one thing is certain: erect in middle of the picture, transfigured, triumphant, the great figure of Christ stands and blesses His work with His radiance.

They have built many fine imitation mediæval churches in our day—Early Christian, Romanesque, Gothic, and what not—at tremendous expense of stonework and gilding, and have covered their walls with paintings and mosaics betokening the deepest and most reverent study of the faith of the Past. But what will the people of the future find to feel about all that? Here at Berck is a chapel of iron and pitch-pine, little better than a shanty; and here a man, of an age of religious unbelief, has painted a series

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## The Chapel at Berck

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of pictures quite regardless of authorized symbolism and dogma. But the dear, devout little nuns are satisfied, and the materialistic doctors and surgeons equally. And, on the whole, I should not be surprised if the people of the future came in pilgrimage to the Chapel of the Sick Children of Berck, to know and feel what manner of Christianity was really vital in the year 1900.

Those vague thoughts became quite clear to me that last evening at the little bathing-place. The sun was setting between the sand-hillocks with their thin grey-green grass ; a crimson ball above a strip of moonstone-coloured water. The sea, at high-tide, broke into two long deep lines, darker but not less luminous, like the cleft in a cat's eye. A pale, pale orange band of mist lay on the water's lip, with the black boats at anchor swaying against it. And a last boat, all canvas spread, came in, gliding slowly like a young swan. I thought of the boat sailed by the angel's wings in the painting in the chapel ; and it struck me that this was the colour of those pictures : a solemn evening, foretelling a radiant day.

## LA FERTÉ-SOUS-JOUARRE

### IN MEMORIAM

TH. BENTZON, ob. 4th Feb., 1907

I AM out of all proportion glad now to have made that extra little journey inside my homeward journey ten years ago ; and to possess round the figure of dear Madame Blanc the background of that home, hers for too short a time, on the banks of the Marne, beyond Meaux. We walked, I remember, along the towing-path, tufted with mint and borage, past the white bridge where the old Rohan house stands with an aristocratic grace, although turned into a school. The usual patient French gudgeon-fisherman was sitting on his punt in mid-stream, making the bottle-green water into great circles as he pulled the line out at regular intervals with his fingers. The sky was cloudy and bright by turns and patches ; and the first yellow leaves fluttered down from the poplars.

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## La Ferté-sous-Jouarre

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Across the wide river was the big, covered *lavoir*; and from it came, tempered by distance into mere workaday cheerfulness, a rhythmic beating of linen and a clatter of shrill gossip. On that autumn morning everything seemed wonderfully fresh, serene, and good.

La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, where she had wanted to end her days, proved too remote for Madame Blanc-Bentzon's literary work, and for the even more exacting, but never shirked, claims of friendship upon a woman who, however cosmopolitan in many things, was typically French in her way of conceiving what in France comes next to maternity, and far above love—the manifold relation which I think of in its own language—*l'amitié*.

So she returned to Paris, where I had already known her in various temporary abodes on the old left bank; and she died, alas! not even among her own books and souvenirs, but in a boarding-house at Meudon. These moves from one modest little flat to another, ever accompanied by certain cherished properties (her likeness by Henri Regnault, among others), always struck me as symbolical of all I knew and guessed of my dear friend's life, of



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the constant interference of circumstances with her wishes, or at least (for her own wishes seemed somehow to embody themselves cheerfully in her duties) with the wishes which our love and admiration made for her.

Thérèse de Solms, as she was called for the first sixteen or seventeen years of her life, ought to have been, and in the eighteenth century would somehow have been, not a woman of letters, a reviewer and journalist living high up in one of those Faubourg St. Germain houses, but the mistress thereof, receiving in the shining big-windowed rooms, *entre cour et jardin*, the noble folk of a hundred and fifty years ago ; encouraging D'Alembert, restraining Diderot, smoothing down Rousseau's vanity, drying the passionate tears of Mdlle. de Lespinassé. Her whole nature, appearance, manner, and even history fitted her into such a framework, and I always thought of it around her. Her cosmopolitan birth, to begin with, would have been so right in that eighteenth century which, because it was so French, knew nothing of national limitations and jealousies. The Solms were cadets of the great German family ; and ancestors of Thérèse Blanc-Bentzon had, I

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## La Ferté-sous-Jouarre

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believe, been in command of the regiment called *Royale Allemagne*. There was also, I forget how, a streak of Scandinavian or Dutch in her, almost Anglo-Saxon, through a grandmother called Bentzon, whose name Thérèse Blanc took to sign her articles and stories when, scarcely more than a girl, left alone with a widowed mother and a baby, she took Madame Sand's advice and began to write for her bread. There was also, I don't quite remember how, some connexion with Martinique; and I always had the sense that what made my friend in a way old-world was partly that Creole blood, that tie with the older France of the Colonies. One feels that closer influence of the past, that identification with the old France still lasting beyond the seas, in her delightful descriptions of French Canada and its old-fashioned homes and convents. I think I was not alone in feeling that, modern as were her ideas, and despite her American visitors, her Russian Nihilist friends, Madame Blanc reached back into the past much farther than most women of sixty.

And it was about her past, when I could get her to speak of herself at all (for she made one speak mainly of oneself and took

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away all sense of egotism and intrusion by her passionate interest), that I preferred to make her talk ; at least when it was not about the Utopian future. One of the last times we were together in her sitting-room overlooking the Archbishop's garden and the cocked-hat attics of the Invalides, the conversation fell upon George Sand. Madame Blanc's stepfather, the Comte d'Aure, had been one of Madame Sand's greatest friends ; Thérèse herself, when she returned, barely married, a mother but still herself a child, to live under her mother's roof, was a frequent guest at Nohant. And from Madame Blanc's conversations George Sand emerged very human, generous, and selfish, a creature much larger than ordinary life, fitting into the company of the wonderful grandmother and mother of the "Histoire de ma Vie." What an "Histoire de ma Vie" Madame Blanc herself could have written had she not been too much interested in those younger than herself and too self-forgetful and generous ! I imagine the book would have had a *Sandian* picturesqueness and romanticalness ; for one of dear Madame Blanc's great charms was that she never saw people in a dull, everyday light, but rather with

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## La Ferté-sous-Jouarre

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the colouring of their hidden possibilities. The book, had she written it (I am sure she has not, alas !), would have had, I feel certain, vistas leading into old feudal and planter days ; corners, or rather perspectives, with the beckoning quality of all receding things, of white-washed convent corridors, crucifix at end ; and half-neglected garden avenues of old country houses. I seem really to have stayed, only in some finer, intenser manner, in that château among the forests of the Nivernais to which she wanted me to accompany her ; the château of which she said, summing up the whole fascination of such places, " Rien n'est attachant comme une belle vieille maison *un peu pauvrement habitée*." But in dear Madame Blanc's thoughts there were other likings than these autumnal ones, as of yellow leaves shed on old terrace-steps and frost-reddened geraniums against a time-stained wall. She felt the attraction of the Paris garret overlooking roofs and steeples, where, lighting her stove in the dawn, the Russian doctress or student dreams of a world without poverty and disease. And Madame Blanc, even at sixty, would have preferred the garret to the château, and chosen revolt rather than sleepy acquiescence.

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It was this mixture, perhaps this contradiction, in her of a vanished past with a future still existing only in dreams, which gave Madame Blanc-Bentzon her influence both as a woman and as a writer. Sitting by her fire, or walking rather slowly by her side under the first green of the Invalides limes, one felt that there was no romance too high-flown and passionate for her flaming-up sympathy; yet that, in some inexplicable manner, her wisdom had the depth and purity of springs which have wandered for ages underground, filtered and cooled in the deep rock.

I have alluded to her influence as a writer. Madame Blanc-Bentzon, who lived a whole lifetime by the work of her pen, was not what you would call a literary talent, still less a genius; and much of the dignity, the fine great-lady quality of her, depended upon her thorough understanding of this fact. She competed with no one, and was therefore superior to all the specially gifted but lop-sided creatures who compete, and so rarely have eyes for anything save their own talent and what feeds or rewards it. Madame Blanc-Bentzon loved literature as she loved human beings,

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## La Ferté-sous-Jouarre

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with passion and discrimination ; most of all for whatever human qualities and ideas, personal or racial, literature contained ; and, having to write for her living, she was, fortunately, led to tell others the things that interested herself in her immense cosmopolitan reading ; just as she told others about the people, the places, the habits, and movements which interested her on her constant journeyings. In this way, and almost accidentally, she gave to the immense cosmopolitan circle of readers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and of Calmann Lévy's collection the equivalent of those wonderful talks about things she had seen, read, heard, guessed, in England, in America, or in Russia ; making, for instance, Whitman or Dostoievsky, Shaker Communities or Russian peasant mystics, intelligible to the average Western European by first passing these strange manifestations through the admirably lucid sympathy of a traditional French woman's mind. It was a mere accident, the trials and courage of her earliest youth, which set Thérèse Blanc-Bentzon writing. But those years of literary activity of hers, of which she spoke with the business-like modesty of one who does her best but is better than any

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profession, and that endless series of reviews and essays, probably meant more for the civilization of the Continental middle classes, and for the good will of country to country, than all the work of literary genius, splendid but irresponsible, and so often cruel, of the same number of years. I knew this. And a sense of my dear friend's real importance in the world's welfare always accompanied my deep personal and, if I may say so, almost filial reverence for her life and opinions. But to me, in the eighteen years of our intercourse, Madame Blanc-Bentzon was, rather than the writer and critic, the incomparable friend, such as perhaps only France can give, in whose gentle, firm hands, and under whose benign, clear eyes, one feels one's life safe and at peace.

I began this paper by saying how glad I am now to have seen dear Madame Blanc-Bentzon in that house, which was hers for so short a time, on the banks of the Marne, beyond Meaux ; and I wrote the name of the little place—La Ferté-sous-Jouarre—at the head of my page.

For it stands, in my recollection, as a perfect

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## La Ferté-sous-Jouarre

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example of the sunny grace and prosperous simplicity, the slightness also and absence of picturesque emphasis, which constitute for me the charm of the French country. I had just returned from a month of rain and cold in the black and green bleakness of the West ; and I seemed back in real France among the scanty woods, the vineyards of the low hills, the rivers between banks of whispering poplars, and pale reaped corn-slopes. La Ferté proved to be a tiny town of whitewashed houses, with gardens overhanging the river, or creeping uphill into the vineyards. And dear Madame Blanc's house was the very one I had always longed for when passing similar places in the train ; the realization of the house one wishes to be one's hospitable friend's ; the white *maison de notaire*, diapered with green fruit espaliers ; small yet roomy, exquisitely clean and sweet ; with frugal meals of excellent game, fruit, and wine, quietly served by the discreet white-capped *bonne*. During the hot autumn noon I sat in the shuttered room smelling of roses, and lazily opened a book, from the shelves all round ; and, in the green dimness, spelt out the pictures and photographs : Tolstoy maned and leonine, and Madame Sand,



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with her *bandeaux* ; also less-known friends, but dearer to me ; and Regnault's sketch of my hostess herself, her dear eighteenth-century face still childish. There was a little long picture also, which had attracted me in all Madame Blanc's successive abodes, telling of the house of Solms in its *ancien régime* glory : a procession of liveried coaches, going to some Royal hunt down the green glades of Fontainebleau or Compiègne, and reminding me, by a confusion of associations, that M. d'Aure had been the Emperor's Master of the Horse, and that his stepdaughter Thérèse had seen Courts in her girlhood.

Madame Blanc would emerge from her writing-room, lined with *Revue des Deux Mondes*, at tea-time ; and, after having goûté'd on exquisite fruit and little galettes, we went out together in the low yellow light.

I have spoken of the walk along the towing-path. Another day we drove on to the high-lying plateau above the Marne, to the little town, or, as they called it, *Bourg*, of Jouarre, its steeple and square tower marking the long low ridge of wine-growing coteaux. Here, among the stubble-fields, the thin green coppices, and the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century

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## La Ferté-sous Jouarre

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deep-roofed houses, one is quite astonished to find, behind some Louis XV. convent buildings (suggestive, at most, of M. Renan's imaginary abbess) a crypt, a sunken bit of Byzantine basilica, with reticulated walls and delicately carved columns and sarcophagi, green with damp—in fact, a little corner of Ravenna. And in this crypt is the carved figure of a lady, of smooth and tender mediæval workmanship, crowned, recumbent, with her dog at her feet. And I remember noticing round her arm a dirty white tape, put there, as the sabot-maker sacristan explained, by a pilgrim who will fetch it away—a poor little possession left pathetically from one year to another to steep in holiness.

Walking home by the cornfields and tiny woods, to the vineyard behind Madame Blanc's own house, we talked of many and various things, principally of Russia and certain revolutionary friends of my friend's. And I remember how she enlarged, with that level wisdom which went with her fine old-world courtesy, on the folly of trying, as some of her countrymen try, to reduce mankind and life to a few regular types ; pointing out that, with human souls as

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with plants and animals, improvement could be attained only by selection and crossing among as many varieties as possible. No one was more modern than she in all her tendencies and judgments. Yet I felt that, deep down, she sympathized with the piece of tape tied round the arm of the stone saint; and that, beneath the sunny reasonableness of her nature, there were hidden chapels dating from distant centuries, even as in that abbey of Jouarre. And I loved her only the more because of such places in her soul, outside which I should have to wait, respectful and wondering.

Those days at La Ferté belong to the past. But I cannot at all realize that when next in Paris I shall not go at once to look for her and find her. And, instead of sadness at the loss, the news of her death has merely, for the moment, brought home very vividly the blessing and the privilege of having had, of having, her friendship.

**BOOK IV**  
**SWITZERLAND**



## HACKNEYED SWITZERLAND

**I** HAVE had occasion to write about parts of Switzerland, and indeed of other countries, which are as yet untrodden by the tourist ; but I should not wish you to think that such districts are necessarily preferred by the votary of the *Genius Loci*. If places are hackneyed, it is only in our own eyes and soul, because we see their commonplace side and the rubbish of everyday detail which we bring with us. And as to tourists, it is my scientific opinion that they lurk reading last year's illustrated papers or exchanging intelligence with each other, or at all events disappear into appropriate holes and corners of the real universe as soon as the *Sentimental Traveller* is abroad. Or is it, perhaps, that the true *Sentimental Traveller* wanders about in places existing only in his own fancy, and safe, therefore, from all profane intrusion ?

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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Whatever the nature of this curious and consoling mystery, it is certain that my companion and I have been unmolested by all tourists during the two days of poignant summer sweetness we have just spent at a no more recondite place than Lucerne. There was the walk in the blazing July morning to the church, full of coolness, of fresh breath of incense and last organ chords, cool like thunder themselves. Then the stroll round the churchyard, and among the fine, deep-eaved houses, each with its tubs of pomegranate and oleander at its steps. The walk, also, the first hot late afternoon, along the deep green racing flood of the Reuss, cold like a glacier crevasse to look at, and among those inconceivably green meadows and orchards behind the city towers ; and down again by steep lanes, between gardens and endless flights of steps, into the old town with its inn-signs and its pillared fountains. And, last of all, there was that supper on the terrace of a little lake-pension, with coolness and night rising out of the lime-trees ; and the row back home, over the water paved with palest rose and violet, to the orange lights of the town. There might have been tourists about, but we did not see,

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## Hackneyed Switzerland

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nor need any one see, them, who is not a tourist himself.

And, talking of hackneyed Switzerland, what spectacle could be less unexpected, more utterly foreseen, than that of the river Aar? Yet, when I came upon it a week ago, it filled me with astonishment and rapture. One cannot carry in one's memory the full and amazing wealth and swiftness of such a river, even if it have accompanied years of one's childhood. And this mighty water-god is no terror like the great rivers, Rhone and Po and Adige, of other countries. He lives his deep swift life alongside of that of men, hurtling past the lock under the cathedral, yet lip to lip with the kerb of the old suburb, *debonair*, trustworthy, so that the children, over the few inches of parapet, can wet their hands and play with him. What purity and strength, bringing air fresh from the furthest uplands in his steady, impetuous course; a moment ago, you would say, among the short Alpine grass and the larches on the rocks; now under the old town-terraces and balconies; and a few minutes hence, ocean-bound, in the Rhine! From my mention of the cathedral you infer rightly that all this happened



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in the most tourist-haunted of places on earth, at Bern.

At Bern, where the tourists see only the Bears. . . . But *do* they see the Bears? There were no tourists about when I went to see the Bears. Perhaps I was myself a tourist, aged seven or eight, when I was last taken to feed them—or was it (as usual in my childhood) merely that I was told that other people fed them? Certainly I had no recollection (just as with the river Aar) that they were half as nice. For, with their huge coats of fine brown fur tipped with delicate cinnamon, and their lumbering playfulness, full of seeming guilelessness, they are emblems not of a race of savages but of just such nobles as those of Bern must have been: well-to-do, kindly, a little *gauche*, fed with all mediæval Europe's buns and carrots (freely lavished on the mercenary troopers, enveloped in beards and plumes, as in bear's gorgeous fur), but keeping the habit of fearful play, of terrible huggings, learnt in the mountains.

Coming back from the *Bären-Graben*, a young fellow got into the Bern city tram in the arcaded street of patricians' houses, where there

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## Hackneyed Switzerland

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is an old escutcheoned nobles' club inscribed "Distelzwang, Gentilshommes." He was a well-built dark boy, with budding moustache, clad in a white sweater, crossed by an embroidered baldrick, and on his straw hat he wore a big civic wreath of paper oak leaves. Two long silk streamers depending from it set forth, in gold letters, that he had been crowned as a successful athlete. The garland was much too big, overflowing his small straw hat and his whole person ! He got out of the tram near the clock-tower, and walked away with a light step, as of an English schoolboy ; or, compared with the clodhoppers around, of a Greek god.

Perhaps all this—River Aar, Bears, and Crowned Athlete—is very hackneyed, and has been seen by legions of tourists. Perhaps even the Philosophers of Philosophers' Walk are hackneyed. But I must explain that close to the dreary little private hospital, with its ether breath (for I have not even been holiday-making this time at Bern), there runs alongside of the jerry-built houses a little canal of pale rapid water, and a signpost tells one the name of the accompanying dusty path : *Philosophen Weg*. How a word can change things ! In my daily,

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three, four times daily, trudge along the suburban road, where the tram-car crashes and jangles between Philistine villas, there was a relief, a refreshment, more than from that channel of water, every time my eye caught that name. For I thought of those Philosophers, shoe-buckled or gaitered, cocked hat doubtless askew, disputing by twos, or walking in solitary thought, along that brook meandering through the meadow-sweet of the great fields, with Bern, a tiny walled town, still a mile off on its hillock. The tourists may have seen the River Aar ; it is possible they may have come across the Crowned Athlete ; and they may even have gone forth to throw carrots to the Bears. But have they seen the Philosophers walking along Philosophers' Walk ? I scarcely think it.

## SÄCKINGEN AND THE TRUMPETER

**B**EFORE that three days' plunge into my childhood—delightful or disastrous or merely funny as it might prove—it happened that I should make a fitting excursion into one of the realms of my childish fancy: Säckingen, the town of Scheffel's "Trompeter." For, having a couple of days to waste still before that visit which had waited nine-and-twenty years, the recollection of an illustration in "Modern Painters" led me to Rheinfelden; and disappointment in Rheinfelden—the town walls built into by electric works, the meadows between the towers filled with factory refuse—drove me for consolation to a neighbouring town I had seen from the train, and in which I thought I recognized the subject of another of Ruskin's Black Forest drawings: a straggling line of high-pitched roofs, a tower, two pointed steeples, and a long

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## The Sentimental Traveller

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covered timber bridge over the Rhine. On a steaming autumn morning I walked there from the opposite station of Stein, on the Swiss bank ; along a flat road between apple-trees, and lingeringly across the bridge, deliciously brown and cool, with the young Rhine rushing green beneath its planks. Then into Germany and the little town. It had a few houses with old-fashioned turret windows—*Ercker* is the word ; some nice wrought-iron signs of inns, a gaunt Jesuit church with St. Fridolin conversing with a skeleton over the porch ; and a funny, pagoda-like seventeenth-century castle. And of course a Scheffel-house, duly inscribed with the birth and death and general glories of the poet of the “Trompeter.” For the town was Säckingen. I entered the only stationer’s, and piously bought the poem, in Teutonic embossed binding, with Wernher Kirchhof trumpeting away in gold and crimson. Shall I ever read it ?

I had not done so since my childhood. Or, speaking more correctly, I had never read it even then. It was doled out to me, quotations and *précis*, where it grew long-winded, in the little Swiss schoolroom twenty-nine years ago,

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## Säckingen and the Trumpeter

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over the copybooks and inkstands and the cups of coffee, by that dear, long-lost friend ; the very one I was about to seek, plunging rather rashly into that gulf of Time. She used to bring the volume—just such a binding, only its gold and crimson embossings a little the worse for wear—to my daily lesson ; and, if my sums and grammar and my *thème* were not too utterly disgraceful, she would reward me, and also her dear self, with the tale of how the roving musician (Germans have a way of roving for no visible reason, and it is so dear of them) fell in love with the daughter of the Baron of Säckingen, and how he made songs, and was counselled and consoled by the magic tomcat Hiddigeigei ; and every one lived happy ever after. . . .

O dear German childhood in that schoolroom panelled with a porcelain stove where we baked apples ! Dear German things never seen since : books heavily embossed or girt with orange labels—Konversations-Lexikons, bound years of *Gartenlaube*, stray volumes of Schiller and Goethe with their inspired curly heads in relief on the cover, and golden lyres and laurels ; Mozart's Letters also ; but, best of all, the

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things unwritten—scraps of poetry, legends, tales of mystery, stored away behind the wide, candid brows, the kind young earnest eyes of my dear teacher : all summed up, symbolized for me in Scheffel's "Trompeter," and this little town of Säckingen.

There was not much to see there, it is true ; in fact, less than at Rheinfelden, where there had seemed to be nothing ! But there were lots to think, to feel about. For how much of what seems to us the Genius Loci is, after all a Genius Vitæ, a kind of Lares and Penates of one's own, a pocket idol like the toys children put under their pillows to dream about ; and—who knows ?—a humble relation of the Genius of Death ?

So, with the feel of Säckingen in my soul and the red embossed volume of the "Trompeter" in my bag, I set forth the following morning on my sentimental journey ; got into the local train which was to carry me, by leisurely stages, through orchards and fir woods and past trim wooden toy-box cottages into my own past.

The past ? Well, of course it wasn't there. But why regret it ? It had not been better, certainly, than this delightful present of delicate cordiality and fine workadayness ; and as a

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## Säckingen and the Trumpeter

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matter of fact in two hours I got to know these dear new friends better than I had really known that dear old friend in many years of childish intercourse, for a child knows very little of the reality of those it loves. And if she I had come to see again eluded me—refused, in a way, to let me see and feel her presence—why, there was the charm of rediscovering her looks, thoughts, ways, of long ago in her two daughters, each a living half of her old self, the dainty, reserved young housewife and the ardent student fresh from the university. And yet . . . It was unreasonable ; but I went on feeling I had not found what I had come for ; I had come, absurdly enough, to see two people of long, long ago : her and myself.

Perhaps the daughters guessed it. Be that as it may, they so arranged that, on my last day there, we two should be left together alone. It was unexpected ; and I found myself, without any preface, going to the neighbouring town alone with my old friend. We got out of the train and wandered about the picturesque Swiss city, with overhanging roofs and turrets and fountains with knights upon them. We looked at the shady bastions, the great Jesuit church,



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the big clock, where, even as at Säckingen, a knight in armour converses with Der Tod, and dragon gargoyles of twisted iron spout from above. We got a rickety *Einspänner* and drove into the hilly country, noticing old country houses, turreted and hedged, of the rural patricians of former days. We even went to a little extinguisher-shaped chapel, against whose white-washed walls, under some beech-trees, Kosciusko lies buried, *Finis Poloniae*; and we said all the things proper under the circumstances.

But of the past we never talked; never alluded to those twenty-nine years ago; never, in fact, found each other or ourselves. It seemed hopeless. At last the time for returning home approached. We went back to the station and prepared to go back exactly as we had come. But we had mistaken the train, and had to wait an hour hard by, on a bench under big trees by the river. The river was the Aar—wide, swift, and green—with the cocked-hat roofs, the striped shutters of a great tithe barn beyond, and the towers of the town. It made me think of Bern; and a story came vaguely into my head in which that same Aar at Bern somehow played a part.

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## Säckingen and the Trumpeter

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"Do you remember," I asked shyly, "the story you used to tell me about some wonderful ladies—sisters—who lived, I don't quite know when, down by the river at Bern? It was very mysterious and strange, and it was called 'The Light in the Corridor.' Do you remember?"

"Yes," she answered gravely. "But you are mixing up two different stories. The 'Light in the Corridor' was about a wicked stepmother—don't you recollect?—but it had nothing to do with the Aar. The one you are thinking of was the story of the five mysterious English sisters who lived at Bern."

"Of course! And there was one who was called . . . could it have been Zenobia?"

"Palmyra," she corrected. "There was Apollonia, Polydora, Palmyra!" She pronounced the *y* German fashion, as a diphthong *u*; and that name thus pronounced was the *Open, sesame* of my childhood.

I recognized her earnest, dramatic voice, and recognized my own breathless listening. We sat there for an hour, waiting for the train, on the bench beneath the big trees, with the green, rushing river and the fantastic, sentimental old

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Swiss town in front of us, she telling stories and I listening.

"And when did it all happen?" I asked, at the conclusion of one of those well-known tales; and I remembered that I had always ended with that question.

"I suppose about a hundred years ago," she answered.

"Surely," I demurred, "not anything as long ago? I thought only . . . well, sixty or seventy?"

My friend turned round with her good, grave smile.

"Yes—*then*; but it is thirty years since last I told it you."

Then she drew out her watch.

"The train is almost due; we must go," she said, grasping her umbrella.

We rose and walked silently to the station. Our afternoon together was over. But we had found each other, ourselves, again.

So ended my excursion into my childhood, into the realms of the "Trompeter von Säckingen."

## A RIDE IN THE ALPS

**M**OUNTAINS exist for our imagination only seen distant from the plain and the widening valley, where the eye scales them ; or else in the reality of their highest regions. For nothing is less like the feeling mountains can give, their freedom and added sweep of eye and fancy, than the valleys which they enclose in their hopeless steepness of flank ; valleys baffling and caging our wishes, multiplying distance, districts of exile where the very stream, twisting round corners and dashing among rocks, seems, despite all haste and struggle, to get no nearer to the countries of its unhemmed and visible progress. Once in the heart of the mountains, high or low as they may be, Alps or humble Apennines, one feels imprisoned until one has been at the top and brought down the knowledge of the kingdoms of the earth which they reveal.

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We had ridden up the little Weisshorn, leaving our horses where the rock emerges out of the soft grass. The valleys had closed behind us ; and the great mountains sat round ; not discontinuous as seen from further down, but an unbroken circuit of walls, towered and battlemented circuit within circuit, as of some mediæval citadel, with flat places and hollows, landings and ledges unexpected, like what one sees from a roof. And as from a roof or balcony, so from this rocky little turret of the Weisshorn peak, one saw all those things which are unseen from below : the world no longer shut out, but expanded to the eye and fancy in peak beyond peak, chain beyond chain, in the suddenly revealed vicinity of great Alps familiar in other places ; the shining Bernina range ; the seven rocky pinnacles above Wallenstadt ; and massed together and fore-shortened distant mountains of Lucerne and Bern, the Tyrol, Valtellina ; who knows ? Perhaps the mountains above Lake Garda and the Adige ; faint whitenesses one can barely tell from clouds ; and, as the sun sinks, blue washes of unsubstantial Alps, unmodelled, serrated, jagged, and turreted against the sky.

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## A Ride in the Alps

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But what takes closest hold of my heart, on the tops of mountains and of those highest passes which afford a real view, is not the distant prospect, but those last embosomings, under the topmost peaks, where the river, still a baby, flows flush of the stones or embedded in moss and minute flowers, without strength or need to cut itself a deeper channel. I imagine every real mountain to have, just under its summit, flattenings and widenings, hollows like amphitheatres beneath sloping crags; smooth landings also where it meets its neighbours, each mountain leaning towards its fellow, or withdrawing from him; and low hillocks, billowings of grass which mimic the moors and downs of older, more blunted parts of the globe.

Those little baby streams (I remember quite similar ones in the highest Apennines), oozing, soaking, emerging, pure white runnels among the flowers and mosses, or trickling over the stones between the big buttercups, where the cows drink chiming . . . One understands these infant streams, without mystery of spring or well-head, when one sees the brown snow still clinging to the hollows, and watches the

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light clouds licking the rocks, melting on their wet surface. The mountain-tops, like the sea (one feels it watching the thin summer fogs off the channel and crossing high over the houses into furthest trees), are the great places of evaporation and congealing, the chief of Nature's laboratories, the origin and end of all living things. The polluted rivers go to be washed in the ocean ; the soiled vapours of the plain rise to be cleansed on the rocks and glaciers ; pure vigour and fertile corruption coming and returning in endless circles.

And the high places show, moreover, what the sea does not (since all the sea's works seem dead or nascent creatures), things quite new, quite undefiled, quite free from the horridness of animal life : the untrodden grass, the crystalline waters, the great trees which have never been planted, and will never be felled, save by the wind's hand.

And as, on the seashore, surrounded by half-living creatures and dead plants and driftwood, one feels oneself to be in the midst of Nature's seeds and manures and composts, her husbandry, horrid and mysterious ; so here in the mountains the very avalanches running to

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## A Ride in the Alps

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deposit the sterile shale, and the boulders rounded by the ice and rolled on by the streams, make one realize that one is in Nature's mason's-yard, among the litter of her carving and building, among the secrets of her architecture.

To these places poor mankind brings its refuse, the wretched hopes of sick folk and the disguised despair of those who watch them.

In this valley-head every one nearly—the very tradesfolk, the very servants, are people flying from death, or, at best, exiled for a time from other men's life. The evening of my arrival at the sanatorium, after the weary journey up, and with the faintness on me which comes with sudden transition from the plain to the high mountains, I realized the sense of being exiled, shoved into a corner to die unnoticed, which must overwhelm the new-comers here. In the chill late afternoon the blankets and cushions and rugs on the verandas, and the ghastly necessities of this particular illness grouped about the wicker sofas, seemed to stand for so many slowly dying men and women. The few yellow lights came out in the deep valley; and the great black forest, the grim



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stony peaks closed it all in under the wintry starlight. But in the night there came the sound of the torrent and the waterfall ; and the chimes, various, combined, of the cows, telling consoling and hopeful tales of living waters and rich, peaceful pastures.

We walked down from the Weisshorn, letting the horses be led in front, and stopping to pick the gentians and pansies clustering in the soft, bright, short grass ; and the lilac-scented daphne on the projecting ledges of rock ; green, flowery places, fields of Enna ; the grass and gentians and pansies filled with coloured light like the windows of fifteenth-century French churches. And when the sun had set behind the peaks, these tiny fields and dells seemed to fill with even more vivid and unlikely colour as they were separated from the world by gathering, thin folds of darkness ; each existing for itself only in its solitude. Are they still there, or do they disappear when you and I are gone, and when only the chimes of the wandering cows and the sound of the torrent rise up towards the peaks and the starry skies ?

## THE WITCHES OF FRIBOURG

**T**HE Genius of Places is no immoral divinity; and whatever the depraved complacency shown by certain of its votaries towards squalor and decay, the true high priests of this cultus have kept it immaculate. Pater's local descriptions are full of the purity of sunny orchards and running waters; Stevenson's "Cevennes" have no disorder save of rocky wildernesses. Ruskin's hatred of Popery is largely due to the neglect and degradation which horrified him in parts of Italy and Switzerland. And there is in his diary an entry about the slums of Amiens which expresses, even more personally than the description of the ruined windmill in "Modern Painters," a positive remorse for any sins of complacency towards picturesque squalor of which he may have been guilty. Such sins and backslidings I too have doubtless

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committed. And the Genius Loci—which, as I have just said, is no immoral divinity—has sometimes devised the means of smiting and humbling the selfish dilettanteism with which I had profaned its worship.

The lower city of Fribourg—the Basse Ville by the river's edge—has been a stumbling-block to my poor traveller's virtue, and it is here, accordingly, that punishment has sought me out, and that I have had my lesson of what "picturesqueness" may mean. The thing has happened on my fourth visit here, and in this manner. I must remind the reader that the river of Fribourg winds between giant walls of rock, lovely with trees and lawns and towers at the top, but at whose base squats the oldest part of the town, huddled in the ooze of that twisting sunless valley. My Fribourg friends have often told me that it is a nest of pauperism and sickness, and have wondered a little at my hankerings after it. But so it is : the place is matchlessly picturesque, and for all the grace of the upper town and the sweetness of the high-lying lime-walks and pastures, down to that Basse Ville of Fribourg my feet and my thoughts have invariably descended.

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## The Witches of Fribourg

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And now for my warning. Yesterday afternoon, after three days' stifling heat, the purifying storm overtook Mademoiselle de D—— and me down there in the river ravine, where I had, of course, insisted on being taken. Whirlwinds of dust arose even while we descended; and the first fat drops fell as we stood on the wonderful little square closed in by climbing walls and rocks and firs and chapels, where the Knight Banneret stands out rusty black on his fountain-pillar against the background of tumble-down châteaux. A minute or two after the clouds all streamed together, and we had to take refuge in the covered wooden bridge over the Sarine. We stayed there a good half-hour, climbing into the rafters, and there we witnessed a most extraordinary spectacle. Just at that bridge the river makes a sudden bend, and forms a smooth pool between the straight rocks and the last scattered houses of the old town. This lower town of Fribourg has seemed to me, ever since my second visit, an odd, ill-omened place, the Middle Ages oozing away among its convents and chapels. The very river is evil-looking; no alpine green or crystalline white, but soiled

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with the scum of that soft corroded stone ; and sullyng, rather than washing, the town on its sunless banks. We were looking down, where we sat under the bridge's timber roof, on to that pool in the rock's bend, unable to distinguish which way the sluggish stream flowed. Suddenly the storm-wind shivered it into cat's-paws and circles, like devil's ducks and drakes. A second later white things arose from the oozy bank, from among a litter of broken wood and rubbish : all the foul old paper of the town, turning into birds, taking flight, rustling on to the ruffled water and swimming with twisted necks and dragged wings. Then more and more took life on the bank, a creepy life, extending now one wing, now the other, in the mud ; quivered, pruned themselves, arose, fell back into quaking heaps before taking to the water one by one ; flocks of accursed, magic curlews along that slimy shore. It was (I understood at once) the witches of the place gathering for some sabbath—a sabbath of contagion, of diphtheria and phthisis. That is the way—thus, and not cleanly from some roof into a clean sky—that the witches fly off to their meetings ! There is at the corner of that bridge,

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## The Witches of Fribourg

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and steeping its walls in the livid water, a queer old house which has stood for years empty ; its delicate Gothic stone windows bunged up by the last inhabitant with bits of rusty tin. And if that house is not the house of the Town-Witch-Finder (of whom Gottfried Keller has told us in his story of " Spiegel das Kätzchen "), then my name is not Vernon Lee !

But to return to those *infamous volatiles*, as the old poets say of their cousins-german the Harpies. The storm went on raging in that twisting gorge as if, once in, it could get out no longer. And at last there came a great clap of thunder and wind ; and the whole wet, shivering, fluttering flock of rags arose and whirled up across the stream, so that we dropped down among the bridge rafters lest one of the odious things should strike us in the face. After that they alighted, and, passing beneath the bridge, floated like draggled white corpses out of sight under the beating rain and echoing thunder.

I am safe back in the friendly eighteenth-century ch<sup>^</sup>let, latticed with green and espaliered with apricots, on the slopes above the city. The smell of lime, of hay, of farmyard, the tinkle of cow-bells and fountain rise up and seem to cool

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the summer evening. As I sit writing I can see the wide summer lightning play over the high-lying meadows, among which the cathedral belfry, the brown-capped towers of Fribourg emerge unaccountably like those of the Heavenly Jerusalem in some fifteenth-century Flemish picture. But I am frightened of that invisible sunken town and its twisting river-gorge; of the things, seen and unseen, which happen in its poverty-stricken picturesqueness. I have had a warning! And, as the dusk fills my attic papered with green lilac-branches, I am glad to feel the eyes of gentle 1820 great-aunts looking down from their black silhouette miniatures and protecting me, unworthy, against the witches.

## THE "BEAUTIFUL SOULS" OF SCHLOSS RAPPERSWYL

**A** NIGHT in the train, despite its squalor and discomfort, is kinder to the fancy than one of those long days of wearied waking travel, when eye and mind are outraged by the amount forced on their notice, and respond to it by mere irritated boredom. For a night journey blurs all wretched details with darkness, and makes them unreal with snatches of sleep, so that one issues out of it, tired indeed, but unconscious of profanation, and with only a vague remembrance of blindfold hurtling through space, as explanation of the miracle (to me, at least, it is one) of change of place.

Moreover, a night journey, in summer, at all events, often allows you to enjoy that miracle in its accomplishment: the unfamiliar landscape emerges from dawn darkness; the sun rises



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with fiery veinings, perchance, above a different lie of the land ; and the new scene makes a poignant appeal to senses and imagination, refreshed, yet just tired enough for willing surrender to dreamy contemplation.

No country, I have always felt, is better suited to such moods than the peaceful swept and garnished lowlands through which the train rushes (nearly always in the early morning) between Lucerne and Basle. My drowsy wishes have always clung to it, as to the details in a dream, like the mists clinging to its shallow green valleys and soft fir-clad hills ; but I have never contemplated the possibility of stopping, of actually living, in this region of unreal romantic peacefulness.

I arrived, as I said before, very early in the morning ; the mists were turning into peaceful autumn rain. The road wound steep between grass slopes whitened as if with frost, and among big apple trees weighed down with crimson fruit and dripping with chilly dew ; the yellow leaves of the walnuts descended slowly through the moist air. The castle had issued out of the mists : the towers and turrets, the gables and weather vane, the long wooden

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## Schloss Rapperswyl

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balconies and high-roofed tithe barns, with shutters striped heraldically and eagles of Hapsburg and bears of Berne frescoed upon their walls, spread out above the pasture slopes and vineyards. But as we mounted, all folded itself together, withdrew amongst the tree tufts, until only a sheer wall of rock and masonry remained visible above : turreted, gabled with the rowan bushes growing erect out of its fissures, an inaccessible piece of romance out of a Dürer woodcut.

But that romance all turns to idyl once you have crossed the creaking drawbridge, and passed inside the walls. The great keep, with its Rittersaal, has been for centuries a barn ; the castle-yard is planted with fruit-trees ; and the loopholed walls connect towers and châlets and gabled dwelling-house. The Austrian knights, with mace and battle-axe, the plumed and purfled *Landvogts* from Bern, have left no trace except their fine Teutonic names and great coats-of-arms on gateway and on drawbridge. Their dignified and disagreeable spectres have long departed ; and quite a different race of shades has come to haunt the lime walk on the battlements, to which the smell of hay and distant sound of

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cow-bells rise up from the misty valley on these autumn evenings.

I felt the presence of those peaceful ghosts from the very first walk I took upon that terrace. And to-day I know the names of two of them. They are Hans von Rapperswyl (born January 25, 1776 ; died, December 30, 1802) and Dorothea Büntzli (born April 22, 1765 ; died, October 1, 1804); and we spelt them out, that dear clergyman's wife and I, on a sort of antique altar, overhung by weeping willows, which some sentimental hand (theirs, perchance?) had planted some hundred years ago, by the little lake of Rapperswyl in the valley close by. The place is not a churchyard (there is a small dismantled *schloss* and a busy saw-mill hard by), and the imitation altar has no appearance of marking graves. The clump of trees, the shady shrubberies, the little channels and pools of water are evidently parts of an "English garden" which some former owner had had the fancy of laying out round his deserted ancestral home long after the fogs and rheumatism of the little lake had driven the Von Rapperswyls to shelter in the handsome gabled house upon a neighbouring hill.

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## Schloss Rapperswyl

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We stooped among the fallen leaves, rubbing the lichen off the inscription ; and making conjectures about the persons commemorated in that inscription. They had been wont to take, not mere dull British *walks*, but leisurely Germanic *Spaziergänge* (*disporting-oneself goings*) for the pleasure of eye and fancy, down to the lake and the old schloss ; perhaps to punt about under the alders on the former moat, and very probably to drink coffee across the road at the saw-mill ; bringing with them sundry chosen spirits to enjoy the evening freshness among the rushes and the fresh-mown meadows, and all the general romanticallness and elegiac sentiment of the place. And then, when they were dead, and buried somewhere else (it doesn't matter where), those chosen spirits, former companions of their *Spaziergänge*, set up this altar to their memory. For, on the two sides of the monument, the clergyman's wife and I succeeded in deciphering an additional inscription, which I translate as faithfully as possible : " O eternally beloved ones gone to sleep ! even in death ye are active for good, since ye awaken in us the wish to be noble as ye were. O tender souls, whom only your

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friends' happiness could render happy, our longing hearts bring you our thanks." The German wording is a halting mixture of the homely and the high-flown. And when my friend and I had spelt it all out, and got on to our feet, our eyes met, and we—— I was going to write *smiled*. But the real truth of the matter is that we laughed. It was very gentle and quiet laughter, so why hesitate to say it? The hesitation merely shows how hard our modern heart has grown, and how far less kind and natural we are than those dear beautiful souls of a hundred years ago. For they had laughter and tears ready at shortest notice; enjoying both equally, bless them, with a dim recognition, perhaps, that there must always be a tiny spice of funniness, like a liberal dash of pathos, in everything we love best; and they took life, those readers of Jean Paul's novels, like Mozart symphonies, fine alternations of melting adagios and stately tripping minuets and *prestissimos* of divine childish mirth.

But to return to the altar under the hanging branches, and to us wondering about it all. Who had they been—those two "tender souls, whom only their friends' happiness could make

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## Schloss Rapperswyl

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happy ; and who those others, in whose breasts their memory kindled a desire for virtue ?”

*She* was already thirty-nine ; while *he*, had he lived till her death even, would have been only twenty-eight. He must have been a noble ; the Rapperswyls had once owned this castle, and had left a great plumed coat-of-arms and a hatchment with all their titles, Counts of the Holy Roman Empire among others. Instead of which *she* was plain Dorothea Büntzli ; and I remembered having seen that name over shops.

“Do you think they can have been husband and wife ?” I remarked rather hypocritically, deeming it needless to submit eighteenth-century doubts to a companion not called on to stand examination in the *Elective Affinities* and Jean-Jacques’ *Confessions*.

“Married ? Those two ?” pronounced the little clergyman’s wife, at once radiant and contemptuous. “There never would have been all that talk about friendship and virtue and noble souls if they had been married. And then, wasn’t she eleven years older than he, and didn’t she die eighteen months after his death ? Depend upon it, there must have been some romance——”

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My Philistinism stood rebuked.

"Yes, of course, some romance," I answered. But when my host offered to consult the learned keeper of the cantonal archives on the subject of Hans von Rapperswyl and Dorothea Büntzli, I changed the conversation.

This has been a country of dreams to me and of idyls, reached I do not know how in that long night's journey. The castle, although I am living in it, belongs less to reality than to those hillside places, towered and tufted with trees, of which one knows they are two-thirds trickery of perspective and imagination, turning to nothing on approach. And yet it is a real castle ; that's the odd part of it. And perhaps the romance of the Beautiful Souls may have been a real romance.

## GRUYÈRES

**L**IKE other forms of devotion, the *cultus* of the spirit of localities has its moments of estrangement—of *aridity*, as it would be called in the language of the mystics. One carries one's divinities, like one's loves, in oneself; and there are states of mind, nay of body, which seem to suspend their existence. One falls to wonder if everything is changed or whether anything was ever different. Have circumstances been too many for me? Am I not merely *chilly*, like the poet, but *grown old*? Or has the North in dull July no power to revive spirits flagging after a Tuscan midsummer? Certain it is that all through this journey, save during the sunset moments in those kind old ladies' garden among the lime-trees, I have not felt once the full, ineffable presence of the Genius Loci.



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## The Sentimental Traveller

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And of course there is always ready to mingle in all impressions of travel an element of sadness. There is lack of humanity in our attitude of mere spectators of the show of things, indifferent and useless passers-by. We feel excluded by what we do not share, this hidden present of localities being gathered, so much living and dying, to its hidden past. There is something spectacular in travel for its own sake ; a holiday attitude in every genuine traveller. And one must be very young, methinks, or very old, not to be vexed after a while by a show which is only a show ; not to be just a trifle abashed by continued holiday-making. For the healthy and fortunate soul is accustomed to a richness and depth of experience ; pleasure and duty ; give and take, closely interwoven ; and we must therefore suffer from such diminished significance. Spend whole days at the play or reading novels ? Out upon it ! we are born and bred (if we have any breeding) to plant and prune as well as to suck fruits ; born to cultivate, as Voltaire said, our garden. Now, when we shift our quarters every day, we have no garden. Hence the melancholy thoughts which lie in wait for the

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## Gruyères

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traveller. There is the briefness of sojourn, the improbability of seeing most of these places again, or the certainty of not seeing them in the same mood. To this may be added a feeling, difficult to define, of the isolation of places and districts, of so many lives—nay, of *all* lives—bound to their small valley or hillside horizon. And the briefness, the fragmentariness of life brought home with the sight of those towns we leave behind, those villages disappearing, folded up in the receding lines of the landscape; those ever-shifting points of view and uninterchangeable horizons. The soul suffers from all this parting. One clings to any familiar name—a river, for instance, however different in its upper and lower course; or, again, to a real similarity of lie of land or vegetation, or architecture; above all, to a mountain chain visible in other places one has been at, and which connects the present moment with the past.

Such wistful efforts to live with the heart, and not with the eye only, are humane already, pious in a sense, and a beginning of better things. They mean that the traveller feels and thinks; and very soon that mist of fancy and

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emotion will take shape, and become—what ? Why, the Genius Loci who has been refusing his presence. For, in such humble matters, as in far greater ones, our finest experiences are those due, two-thirds at least, to our wish how things should be—to a certain odd, hidden craving for significance and fitness.

The thing was shown by what broke through that state of indifference, *aridity*, of which I have just spoken. How indifferent, how *arid* I felt at that moment is shown by my insisting on taking, for a trifle of convenience, that night train from Fribourg. It is a downright shame, scolded our acquaintances, to lose the impression of arriving at that most singular little place, Gruyères.

Lose it ! Did we lose it ?

It became quite dark soon after we started ; only the outlines of the trees, or here and there a church, visible quite solidly black against the perfectly pure, pale sky. The train was climbing slightly ; but the country looked flat ; some great high plateau one guessed, wider and wider, the lowness of the horizon marked by the low-hanging stars, and fitfully revealed (and with it the gentle undulation of its line)

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## Gruyères

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by broad flashes of summer lightning. We were travelling between meadows, the freshness and sweetness of the grass and hemlock penetrating to us, and the song of crickets and the sound of cow-bells. When we got out at Bulle and began to drive it seemed darker still ; and distant shapes of hills loomed uncertain. We drove, surrounded, so to speak, by that great sky close-hung with stars ; and felt we were driving between deep pastures, fragrant and ineffably cool after those hot days in the town. And every now and then the sound of the cow-bells, their enchanting little broken chime-clashing, was mysteriously on either side of us.

Entering the village street of high mediæval houses, the light of the one electric lamp by the washing-trough was thrown up against the white walls, showing the scarlet and rose of the geraniums ; thrown up also into the immensely projecting roofs. Not a creature or a sound ! The scent of grass, the sound of cow-bells seemed to have followed us ; and, between the houses, the heavens were hung close with stars. Were those mountains opposite, or roofs ? Impossible to say, mere dark masses in the darkness. Only one had a sense

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of being high, high up. This was Gruyères ; and shall be.

Of what we foolish mortals call reality, of the disturbance in my small private self, which, it seems, occurred in that place, what remains ? A few unintelligible facts, and the knowledge, third-hand it would seem, that there was bitterness. While that sky, that village street in the electric flare, the sense of freshness, fragrance, peace, remains with me : nay, who knows ? I may give it, with good luck, to my reader.

Next morning, looking out of my window, I had another impression, equally delightful, of being in a small mediæval town. There were tall whitewashed houses with delicately carved mullions and flamboyant doorways ; a tower, turrets ; and at the street's turning a pathetic wooden chapel, shingle-roofed. And the great blue-green mountain-sides, pasture and forest and rock, close at hand, rising sheer above it all. This impression, also, did not tally with the Things-in-Themselves, and I was very soon busied with painful thoughts. But, as I said, the Gruyères that matters is the one which has remained.

## THE KEEPSAKE

### (CONCLUSION)

I HAVE had occasion to speak of the stay-at-home life which, by repression of all longings for travel, made me a Sentimental Traveller. Those years of refusal taught me what I most cared for, and no doubt about it. Taught me also to make what I wanted in my imagination, out of whatever lay nearest at hand. The passionate feeling for places depends very largely on a habit of craving for the *beyond*: *beyond* the plain which intervenes between us and the mountain range; *beyond* the hill, the pass between us and the seashore. And it is my experience that the Genius Loci is sure to haunt the turn of the road where our daily walk comes to an end; or the place where the rocks, growing too steep, close in the mystery of the stream; we feel him immanent in every valley

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which opens and closes again as the train or the motor rushes by. All our finest pleasures require forestalling in wish and fancy ; and it is doubtful whether nine-tenths of them are not due to such forestalling. This does not mean that the finest happiness exists in anticipation only, but that when it really comes in the present its most exquisite essence is but the remnant of expectation and longing.

And this is fit and decent, surely, that into the best we receive from Fate there should enter somewhat of our own making ; that the perfect sweetness of any sort of love, for places as for creatures, be due to faithful wishing : Rachel growing in grace during the years of Jacob's service.

I like this thought. It has been shaping itself in my mind ever since my last stay, two or three years ago, at Padua. During the autumn days in that dear old town I chanced to notice that what gave me greatest pleasure was the market-place ; and not so much by its realities, as because the big-domed palace, sentinelled with towers and clustered round with booths and awnings, had been familiar to me in an 1825 *Keepsake*, whose

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## The Keepsake

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prints I pored over while convalescing from a childish illness. I had had malarious fever ; and in the weakness it left many things were blurred and their relations altered. Solidity and duration seemed to have gone out of everything, and all that depends on them ; but certain other qualities—the volatile and intangible ones, the imaginative colour and perfume—had grown most curiously intense : reality was dreamlike and dreams were real. The books I read or merely turned the pages of were what I really dwelt in ; the shuttered room had become a distant outside. I lay in an armchair, fed on toast and lemonade, and read Gray's Letters, I recollect ; and a volume of "*Tales from Blackwood.*" But the chief resource was that *Keepsake* or Annual. It was bound in brown morocco, with gilt edges, and had quantities of loose tissue paper which fluttered when you turned the pages. The prints were of that soft and vaporous style which made you feel (like Turner's illustrations, for the rest) that the scenes depicted, Italy and the East and even the cathedral towns of France and the Rhine castles, were reserved for persons of most sensitive nerves and refined manners : Lady



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Blessingtons and *Ennuyées* with their *Diaries*. . . . The volume I got hold of was all North Italian cities ; and among these I rambled with a delight such as no real places (I had seen but few interesting ones) had as yet given me, and indeed, perhaps, have given me since. "Rambling" is the wrong word ; it was no active living, but a sort of brooding sense of the existence of those places. Anyhow, it was a slow, beneficent rapture, spread through the hours, days, and weeks, the timeless time of convalescence. And something of it lasted. I was aware, all through my youth (I have before me a note to the effect, written twenty-three years ago), that to this must be due an undercurrent of delicious, faint excitement, independent of the pleasure of the actual moment, and filling me whenever I realized that I *was* in Verona, Bologna, or any characteristic North Italian city. And during that last visit to Padua I could detect the undying virtue of those *Keepsake* prints as I strolled among the awnings and baskets of the Piazza dell' Erbe. I had loved it all, like Rudel the Lady of Tripoli, before seeing it ; and the faint thrill of that imaginative love still made the place, of a kind so familiar and almost

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## The Keepsake

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hackneyed to me nowadays, delightful and in a way wonderful.

There are moments in all our lives—most often, alas ! during our childhood—when we possess the mystic gift of consecration, of steeping things in our soul's essences, and making them thereby different from all others, for ever sovereign and sacred to us. It is largely connected, I think, and like to think, with our poverty of experience in those early years ; for it is remarkable how experience—meaning thereby the repetition of all sorts of impressions—makes us incapable of getting any good out of itself, and wastes our time in putting to rights and wondering how so much has been mislaid or moth-eaten. . . . Whereas childhood, owning little in this as in other ways, has to be inventive and make the most of whatever it has got. Slight resemblances, trifling fragments, must stand for whole impressions. I can remember the importance of the first old portrait—just a white face and ruff and sword-hilt in a mass of black—which I ever saw ; it hung on a staircase in a house whither we had gone to hire a piano. That *was* a romantic picture ! And I only wish I

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had seen a few million less others to efface its remembrance. In cases where subsequent *too much* (or even *enough*!) is fortunately kept at bay, the imaginative episode may, so to speak, spread over years, and leave our feeling permanently the richer. Thus, a little white-washed colonnade among trees, seen on the daily walk, did service for cloisters, monasteries, Lombard *certosas*. As a crass fact, it was a part of nothing more poetic than a bathing-establishment; but I owe to it, I firmly believe, much of the special charm which whitewashed and pillared monastic interiors still have for me.

With all this is connected the efficacy of certain quotations of prose or verse. Two lines of the *Allegro*, almost the least pregnant of that string of terse suggestions, became part of my life—I mean, were perpetually lived over and over again—when I was sixteen or seventeen :

“Towers and battlements it sees  
Bosomed high in tufted trees.”

They had been mixed up, in some way, with my first sight of the ramparts and belfries of

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## The Keepsake

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L—— ; and had got to mean a lot of other places besides, most of which never existed for the bodily eye.

Speaking of the essence of future emotion which we distil out of mere written matter, reminds me that besides that *Keepsake* (whose letterpress, by the way, went for little or nothing) there was another volume which helped to make me a Sentimental Traveller, supplying *fata morgana* places to shimmer and shift across the dulness of my daily life. It was not even a book, but only a series of articles, written by a roving clergyman of our acquaintance, in a bound volume of some *Chambers's Journal* or thereabouts. I read them years before the coming of that *Keepsake*. They described the author's tramps up the side-valleys of the Rhineland. I can remember the name "Wetzlar-on-the-Lahn" ; but so little of the contents that I cannot tell whether there was any mention of Goethe and the Werther episode. That is of no importance ; what remained of those close-printed pages which I pored over for hours between my lessons and my daily unchanging walks, was not a fact, not even a blurred image, but an emotion. I never went

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so far as to wish that I might ever wander up river-valleys, among old towns and castles (for I presume, though I do not recollect, that it was all about ~~S~~d towns and castles); the feeling awakened by those pages was far more humble and concentrated than desire or hope. Indeed, I do not know what to call it except just *love*. It was the first stirring of the worship of the Genius Loci in the penumbra of a child's small soul: the divinity would inhabit that worshipper.

I have no idea whether those papers, "Wetzlar-on-the-Lahn" and the rest of them, were good or bad literature, or even attractive or boring reading; but this much I am convinced of—that the author, that pedestrian ex-parson who looms in my memory as a dullish person, loved what he wrote about. He must have been a *Sentimental Traveller*, probably without guessing it; and, by something like an *imposition of hands*, must have ordained that small reader of his into being another.

And this belief is of great comfort whenever, as often happens, it is borne in upon me that no

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## The Keepsake

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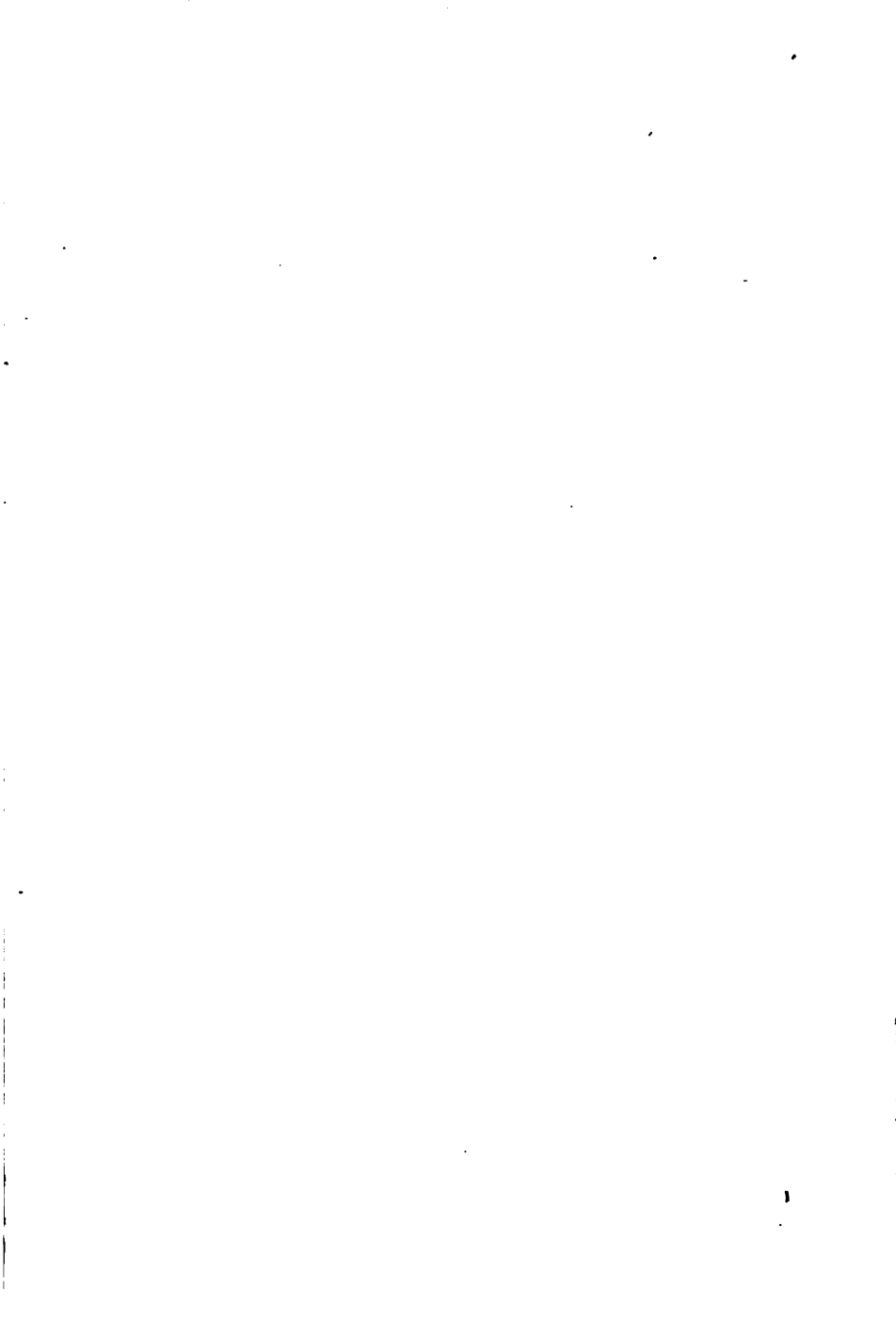
description can make you see things unless you have seen them before ; and that, of all vain dilettanteish writings, these essays of mine must therefore be the most dilettanteish and futile, particularly to the very readers with whom I wish to share my impressions, those, namely, who have but little opportunity of seeing the countries, or at least the places I have written about. It is lamentably certain that I cannot make them see what I describe ; and yet the impulse, the long habit, of writing about each thing which gives me pleasure may not be mere delusion. There is creative virtue in all decent feeling, in all happiness, when tinged with respect and gratitude. The emotion which has been stirred in me by localities may be transmitted, though the images cannot ; and those whose feelings have been heightened by the transmission of mine will find in what they *do* see, and make in what they *do not* see, places and things to delight their hearts. I shall, in my turn, have initiated or consecrated neophytes to the worship of the Genius Loci ; and helped others to journey through the world, or through their lives, less as bagmen than as Sentimental Travellers.

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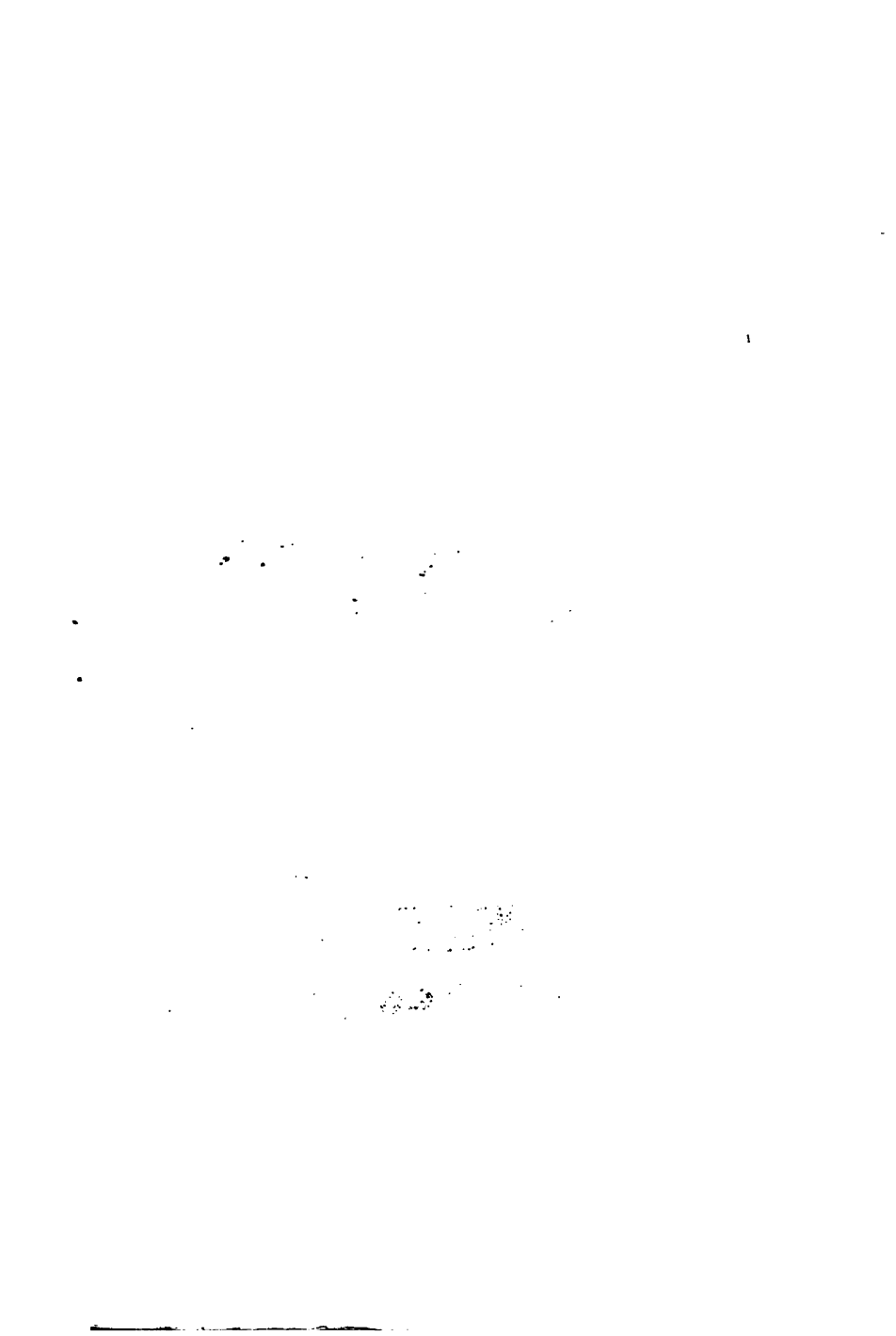
## The Sentimental Traveller

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At least, this is my consolation, when I recollect my childish readings in those bound magazines ; and also that volume of the *Keepsake*.







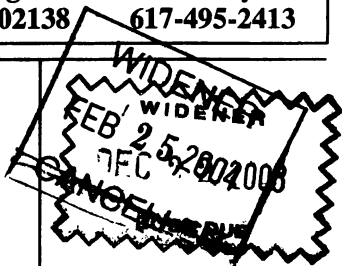


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